



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

VISION

What do you see as the biggest problems facing Palo Alto and how would you address them?

PAT BURT

1. Housing affordability, particularly for low and moderate income workers. How to meet our Housing Element requirements while retaining community character and meeting the infrastructure and community service needs of those new residents. Contending with Builders Remedy projects (including our legal opposition to the extent allowed and advocating for changes to these state laws) will be among our biggest problems going forward. Contending with AB2097 (which prohibits us from requiring any parking for new projects within a half mile of major transit) will have potentially very detrimental impacts.
2. Public safety. Completing the full restoration of police and fire staffing, providing full fire station staffing/water trucks, and completing the rebuild of outdated police and fire buildings.
3. Retail revitalization. How we adjust to changing retail conditions from greater remote work and online shopping by modifying, rather than eliminating, our Retail Protection Ordinance.
4. Governance. Ensuring that the Council determines city policies and provides oversight of staff.
5. Environmental protection, climate adaptation and climate protection.

KATIE CAUSEY

1. Housing - Palo Alto can be a city where your grandkids and grandparents live within a few blocks from each other; where your neighbors are teachers, healthcare workers, and first-responders. That means making it easier to build housing, affordable housing, passing renter protections, and investing in our housing nonprofits so families, local business employees, and people from all walks of life can be here together in our community.
2. Safe streets - whether you're walking, biking, using a wheelchair, or pushing a stroller, it should be safe and easy to get around your neighborhood. We need to strengthen our bicycle and pedestrian plan to provide protected infrastructure around high collision areas.
3. More city events - Palo Alto can be a city where we join friends and family to attend an LGBT+ Pride parade downtown, or go to California Avenue for exciting festivities for celebrations such as Diwali, Lunar New Year, and Nowruz. It can be a city where seniors and kids come together to paint beautiful murals in our public spaces and make new connections with neighbors. Palo Alto is a culturally diverse community with residents of all backgrounds from all over the globe. All our community members deserve to feel seen, safe and celebrated, but we do not always give our neighbors the opportunities to thrive. Especially during a time of rising loneliness, it's more important than ever that we invest in spaces for community members to come together and opportunities to strengthen cultural bonds.

ANNE CRIBBS

Our biggest problem is our inability to get stuff done. We must speed up the processes for the City's projects and speed up permitting and inspection of business and homeowner projects. There are numerous examples of how project review and permitting are done more quickly in other Peninsula cities and we could learn from them.

My priorities are to work on three major challenges facing Palo Alto—1) meeting our adopted housing goals, 2) meeting our adopted environmental goals and 3) helping create exciting activities to attract people to our Downtown and Cal Ave centers and throughout the city. These priorities are connected and would improve our quality of life and fill our vacant retail spaces

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not respond.

GEORGE LU

Housing Affordability. Teachers, first responders, young families, and seniors need to be able to live in Palo Alto. Building more housing at all income levels is the best way to support our schools, reduce our climate impact, and build a more inclusive community. I will vote for housing, push for responsive neighborhood planning, and advance tenant protections.

Safe Streets. Palo Alto regularly sees preventable traffic accidents and deaths. We must commit to a Vision Zero goal, and have a strong mandate to prioritize safety. Otherwise, we will continue to see infrastructure projects languish for reasons ranging from aesthetic concerns to lack of funding. I will push for infrastructure, education, and traffic enforcement.

Supporting Local Business. Palo Alto has uniquely burdensome requirements for small businesses, and has been slow to recover since the pandemic. I will push for code simplifications (zoning, permitting, parklets, etc.) to remove delay, costs, and uncertainty. I will invest in our streetscapes, and make sure our retail corridors are clean, safe, and inviting, with events and programming for all .

KEITH RECKDAHL

The largest issue facing the City is how to implement the City's Housing Element, particularly how to get the planned 6000 housing units actually built. The zoning changes have been implemented, but the planning for any additional parks or infrastructure must be performed now before the potential sites are developed, preventing the construction of the parks/infrastructure.

Affordable housing is another challenge. Palo Alto's RNHA allocation includes over 3400 units for Moderate Income and below, with over 2400 of these being Low Income and below. Since inclusionary units will be insufficient to meet this allocation, the City must subsidize many of these affordable units, either by using City funds, government grants, or partnering with nonprofit housing groups. Palo Alto's Measure K does provide some affordable housing funding, but the City must develop additional funding sources.

It will be difficult to build 6000 housing units without making traffic worse. To help mitigate congestion, we must provide residents with high-quality transportation options, particularly bike and mass transit. Every person who uses a bike or bus is one less driver competing with the people who cannot bike/bus. The City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan Update, which is currently underway, will improve the safety and convenience of biking and walking. We must collaborate with VTA to boost bus ridership, as increased use leads to more frequent service, creating a positive cycle that further encourages ridership. We should also bring back the City's shuttle and/or collaborate with Stanford to extend and improve their Marguerite shuttle.

Both University Avenue and California Avenue areas are experiencing high retail vacancies, which are being addressed by both the Planning & Transportation Commission (PTC) and the Council's Retail Ad Hoc. The City must prioritize streetscape improvements in our retail area and also enact the PTC recommendations to streamline zoning. We also need to collaborate with our local merchants to better understand how the City can improve its retail areas.

Climate change is a significant long-term risk for the City. Worsening rain storms will aggravate stream flooding, hotter and drier weather increases wildfire severity, and sea level rise will threaten significant parts of Palo Alto. We must aggressively continue our Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP), prioritize the Newell and Pope-Chaucer bridge work, and improve both our fire mitigation and evacuation plans in the foothills areas.

GREER STONE

One of the biggest problems facing Palo Alto is the severe lack of affordable housing. As housing costs soar, it creates an imbalance that drives middle-income families, teachers, and essential workers out of the city, contributing to a growing inequality in our community, and the loss of beloved small businesses. To address this, I've worked to advocate for commonsense renter protections and the development of truly affordable housing, while balancing the impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and advancing sustainability goals to protect our environment.

Another pressing issue is youth mental health. As a teacher and public servant, I've witnessed firsthand the toll academic pressure and social isolation have taken on our young people. I helped lead the city's efforts in creating a Youth Mental Health Taskforce and have continually pushed for policies that foster well-being and ensure that youth voices are integrated into city decisions.

We also face significant environmental challenges. Palo Alto must continue to lead in sustainability efforts, which is why I've been actively involved in the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP) to push for strong environmental policies that address climate change while promoting the health and well-being of our entire community.

Finally, Palo Alto has fallen behind on creating social opportunities for residents to connect with each other. That's why I've created the Palo Alto Connect initiative that aims to help connect Palo Altans to nature, art, their government, and to each other. Neighboring cities have outpaced us when it comes to offering community events and we are outsourcing residents to those cities to enjoy their events and businesses. We should reinvest in our own community assets and create new opportunities for our residents to connect.

DORIA SUMMA

1. Housing Affordability. I will continue to promote deed-restricted affordable housing. I strongly support retaining existing naturally affordable housing such as older housing stock, the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park and the President Hotel Apartments..
2. Managing within state housing mandates. We need to work within state mandates that enable developers to build housing and mixed-use projects that both ignore local development standards and do not guarantee affordability. I will work with the City Attorney's Office to make sure that we do everything within the law to maintain our local development standards when possible. For example, we need to retain ADA parking close to convenient locations.
3. Climate Change: I support electrification, including grid modernization as the single most effective way for Palo Alto to reduce local emissions. We also need to continue protecting our urban canopy, open spaces, and local biodiversity. We need to prepare for sea-level rise and potential flooding.

4. Public Safety: I support fully staffing the police and fire departments and supplying them with the tools they need to do their job. I would like the police to be more visible on our streets, in commercial districts, and in our neighborhoods.
5. Retail Retention and Viability: I support the retail protection ordinance. We need to retain business districts with neighborhood-serving retail across Palo Alto, not just on University and Cal Ave. We need to have attractive public spaces in our retail districts. I support adjusting restrictions on formula retail on Cal Ave and I believe we need to listen to local businesses better than we have in the past.

CARI TEMPLETON

- **Inclusive Communities**: Ensure that the 6k new homes that Palo Alto has agreed to create include affordable housing, create an inclusive sense of community, and foster retail recovery. New Palo Altans deserve the same status and amenities as existing Palo Altans.
- **Safer Streets**: Invest in safety-related bike, pedestrian, and road infrastructure that keeps residents safer while protecting against climate change and simultaneously creating quality construction jobs. Palo Alto should be a safe, walkable city that prioritizes the welfare of its residents, including students biking to school and seniors using the sidewalks.
- **Green Spaces**: Improve open spaces and parks by expanding such that new homes will have ample access to open space just as our existing residents. Palo Alto's relationship with nature is a significant part of its identity. As we expand housing, we should also expand access to nature.