



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

HOUSING

What, if anything, would you do to protect existing rental housing and its tenants?

PAT BURT

I supported lower the occupancy requirement for just cause eviction protections from 12 months to 6 months and advocated for capping security deposits at 150% of monthly rent for unfurnished apartments. Additionally, we secured relocation assistance for tenants facing no-fault evictions, made these eviction protections permanent, and introduced a rental registry to improve transparency and future planning.

In addition, we must ensure that our policies don't encourage the demolition of existing affordable housing, and displacing residents, many of whom cannot afford to move elsewhere in their neighborhood or the city. Palo Alto's rental registry will help increase transparency and accountability within the city's rental market. By collecting accurate data on rental properties, the registry enables the city to better enforce housing laws, protect tenants' rights, and preserve affordable housing. It also allows for tracking key trends, such as rent increases, evictions, and property conditions, helping to prevent unlawful practices and displacement while holding landlords accountable for maintaining safe, habitable homes. Most importantly, the registry will also support informed decision-making as Palo Alto plans for future housing needs and policies, ensuring that the city can effectively address its housing challenges and promote long-term stability for renters.

KATIE CAUSEY

Having worked in our local tenant nonprofits protecting existing rental housing and tenants are the highest priority to me, whoever is elected to council will be exploring policies like anti-rent gouging and analyzing data from our rental registry to determine what renter protections are best suited for our city.

ANNE CRIBBS

I support eviction protections, resources to help renters deal with landlords, and the rental registry. After implementation of the rental registry, we can add more protections if needed.

I am not in favor of rent control at all. I have seen the excesses and cheating in San Francisco..

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not respond.

GEORGE LU

I am excited to see the rollout of our new rental registry program. We've had a version of the rental registry in the books since 2002, which was never seriously implemented.

We have to show a commitment to renters, who consist of almost 50% of Palo Alto residents but aren't properly heard. I support increased penalties for negligent landlords, anti-rent-gouging measures, just cause protections, increased notice for significant rent increases, subsidized legal counsel, and discrimination protections.

KEITH RECKDAHL

In recent years many renters experienced real hardships from some landlords. That's why my work on the Housing Element and the Planning and Transportation Commission included developing strong renter protections, including limits on security deposits and relocation assistance when leases are terminated without cause. While renter protection is critical, we must carefully balance our programs to keep Palo Alto a desirable community for constructing new rental housing.

The Housing Element upzoning was limited to parcels with older buildings in order to maximize the likelihood of development. Unfortunately, these older buildings house most of Palo Alto's naturally affordable housing units. This means that the Housing Element upzoning will replace much of our less-expensive housing with newer, more-expensive housing. Apart from inclusionary housing units and in-lieu fees, these new developments will not replace the existing naturally affordable units.

When landlords break existing leases to construct new developments, the tenants can now receive relocation assistance. The City could additionally require landlords to give the current tenants priority for rentals in the new development, but that isn't necessarily desirable since that would require them to find temporary housing during construction and also pay the higher post-construction rent.

GREER STONE

As a renter myself, I deeply understand the challenges tenants face, especially in a high-cost city like Palo Alto. During my first term, I've been a strong advocate for renter protections, working to prevent unjust evictions, limit excessive security deposits and rent increases, passing the city's first rental registry, and ensure access to relocation assistance when necessary. Additionally, I would work to protect older, more affordable rental units from redevelopment or conversion to luxury apartments, ensuring that these options remain available for lower-income tenants. We must also explore rent stabilization measures, while continuing to invest in affordable housing developments, particularly Below Market Rate (BMR) units, to ensure that rental options remain accessible to all.

DORIA SUMMA

To the extent we can under state law, we should protect existing naturally affordable (older, less expensive) rental units from upzoning to more expensive new housing. As a commissioner, I was the strongest supporter of the recent additional renter protections that were passed by the City Council.

CARI TEMPLETON

Secure and sustainable housing access is one of my top priorities. I will push the City to meet the goals set in the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan and Housing Element so we can ensure more affordable and missing-middle housing, and reduce traffic congestion through adequate public transportation. To accomplish this, I will support policies that ease or adjust regulations that unnecessarily obstruct the City's progress toward housing objectives, including converting commercial land for housing. The City should also increase our investment in affordable housing, while making the approval process more predictable and cost-effective. I have recommended approval of the renter registry so we can track compliance among landlords with the policies governing renters' rights, which is being rolled out this fall.