



## 2022 City Council Candidate Questions

### RETAIL

**What are your ideas to help local small businesses, especially those that serve neighborhoods, to survive and thrive?**

#### **PAT BURT**

In addition to retaining an updated Retail Protection Ordinance, the most important thing we can do is invest in making our retail areas are clean, attractive, and vibrant. We must continue to refine and streamline our retail permitting process, provide financial incentives and grants where possible, and promote flexible zoning to help small businesses thrive. I would also back “buy local” campaigns, push for infrastructure investments that attract our residents and neighboring communities, and support business incubators or mentorship programs to give entrepreneurs the resources and connections they need.

#### **KATIE CAUSEY**

Reduce permitting process so it is easier for our local businesses to open and thrive.

#### **ANNE CRIBBS**

As listed above, I would add customers through additional housing, policies to fill the vacant spaces with services and activities that attract people to come, visit and hang out. Spaces must be clean, safe, and pretty.

My experience in creating and supporting activities throughout my career in Palo Alto will be a big advantage in achieving these goals.

#### **HENRY ETZKOWITZ**

Did not respond.

#### **GEORGE LU**

We need to invest in our streetscapes. Cal Ave and Downtown are first class public spaces that should be treated as such, with wide sidewalks, public art, and more nature built into the street. Midtown and El Camino need even more basic investments, like cleanliness and walkable sidewalks.

Beyond physical investments, I've heard so many horror stories from small business owners. We simply have to be more responsive. When the Aquarius Theater wanted to sell beer, the permit process took 14 months and required submission of expensive architectural diagrams. In contrast, Santa Monica simplified rules to essentially allow existing food-serving businesses to serve alcohol by right last year.

While we are making investments in streamlining, we have to push further and copy good ideas from cities like Santa Monica and San Francisco.

## **KEITH RECKDAHL**

Before the City can improve the business environment, the Council and PTC must be fully aware of the business community's issues. The City must perform outreach to help merchants organize themselves and then hold regular meaningful discussions with the merchants and other business organizations. Monthly or quarterly roundtable meetings between City Council members, the Chamber, and local business leaders to discuss current challenges, opportunities, and city initiatives can provide a platform for open dialogue and feedback, but they're most effective if the business organizations have identified common ground they can advocate for together.

The California Avenue streetscape redesign is long overdue. This is a source of frustration for both the merchants and the general public. The Council must prioritize its engagement and move the project efficiently through the planning process. If elected, I will emphasize the importance of adhering to project timelines for both the design and construction. I will request regular updates to ensure progress is being made, with staff providing written updates that clearly detail milestone status, challenges faced, and expected completion timeline.

I will also regularly visit local businesses to understand their needs and challenges firsthand and also build better personal relationships with business owners. The City's communication channels must keep the business community informed about city policies, upcoming projects, and opportunities for engagement. And, when things go well, I'd like to implement programs that recognize and celebrate successful or innovative businesses in the community, which can enhance their visibility and contribute to a supportive business environment.

Implementing the Housing Element, increasing the number of housing units and therefore increasing nearby residents will also increase a neighborhood's foot traffic, supporting the retail environment and making the area feel more vibrant. To speed this development, the City must prioritize the neighborhood planning now, so that any subsequent building permits can be approved and issued efficiently and promptly. I will advocate for regular meetings with the business community and retailers to get targeted feedback to meet this goal.

## **GREER STONE**

Supporting small businesses, especially those in neighborhood centers, requires a combination of direct assistance and community engagement. I would advocate for streamlining the permitting process to make it easier for small businesses to open and operate.

A key strategy to help these businesses thrive is expanding community events to attract more shoppers. Hosting local events like street fairs, farmers markets, and seasonal festivals can draw in not only residents but also visitors from across the region, increasing foot traffic to neighborhood shops. Collaborating with neighborhood associations to organize these events will help build a strong, loyal customer base for these businesses while creating a sense of community. We currently export too many Palo Altans to neighboring communities to shop, eat, and play, we need to keep their business here in Palo Alto and I would prioritize that work by reinvesting in Palo Alto events.

Additionally, ensuring that zoning and planning policies support diverse neighborhood retail—without displacing existing businesses—will keep our neighborhoods vibrant. Neighborhood centers, along with University and California Avenue, must have the necessary infrastructure, like parking and transportation, to make it easier for residents to support these businesses regularly. By focusing on these combined efforts, we can help our local small businesses survive and thrive in a competitive market.

## **DORIA SUMMA**

I support retaining ground-floor retail requirements across the city. The definition of retail uses should be broader to allow some uses that don't fit into existing categories. I support loosening the

restrictions on formula retail on California Avenue. (These restrictions do not currently apply to downtown or neighborhood centers). I will work with local businesses and property owners to support neighborhood centers throughout Palo Alto.

## **CARI TEMPLETON**

The City has recently hired a staff person to work with small businesses and help them get what they need from the City as far as support. In addition, the City should work with the Chamber of Commerce to encourage the formation of small business associations, especially for businesses which are located near each other, such as Downtown, California Avenue, or Midtown.

Having more interactive and fun events that draw people into these small business centers would also be wonderful. Currently programs like 3rd Thursday on California Avenue are independently operated and very successful. However, we should consider how the City can promote and participate in programs like these that draw larger and more consistent crowds to our business areas to support our retailers.