



## **2024 City Council Candidate Questions**

### **Katie Causey Responses**

#### **EXPERIENCE**

##### **What experience with Palo Alto community issues would you bring to the council?**

I am a lifelong Palo Alto resident and a proud graduate of Ohlone, JLS, and Paly. I've volunteered actively in the community since I was a teenager. I bring years of experience working in our local nonprofits and I also hold a degree focused on local policy. Currently I professionally work with city governments on the Peninsula on their street infrastructure, ensuring repairs happen quickly and streets are safe to walk and bike. I also serve as a member of the City of Palo Alto Human Relations Commission.

Like many candidates in this race I bring a background in housing and transportation policy, but there are a few aspects of my experience that are particularly valuable.

Having worked in our local housing nonprofits with Palo Alto seniors and families when they are facing eviction or close to having nowhere to live, I know the process many of our seniors and families go through in navigating our cities resources and where improvements need to occur.

Working professionally with city governments on their street infrastructure I know how to effectively work with state partners and identify when breakdowns in communication are happening internally so cities can operate more effectively.

As a member of the City of Palo Alto Human Relations Commission and a former nonprofit worker I know how to have a productive relationship with advocates when they approach a city on sensitive issues.

#### **GOALS**

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

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.

**Do you have any interests, such as ties to Stanford or other entities that would cause you to recuse yourself on issues that are before the council? If so, what are they?**

No, as a commissioner I have proactively communicated with the city attorney to ensure I have no conflicts of interest.

## HOUSING

**What does the term “affordable housing” mean to you?**

Having previously worked in our local housing nonprofits a more accurate term for “affordable housing” is income-restricted housing, where your income must fall within a specified range to qualify. Typically, the term “affordable housing” refers to housing that is affordable to lower and sometimes moderate-income households, where developments receive subsidies to keep rents low. These homes are deed-restricted, so they will remain affordable at a specific income level for a long period of time (usually at least 55 years in California).

**Four proposed developments along El Camino will create about 1100 new housing units, with only 15-20% of these being below-market-rate housing.**

- **How are we to meet HCD’s requirement for low-income housing by requiring only such a low percentage?**

By supporting additional reforms that limit the number of public hearings and set firm deadlines for approval or denial of applications for housing projects, which makes it less expensive to build below market rate projects.

- **How do we ensure units will include a range of bedrooms, so they are feasible for families?**

The council sets the tone for the types of developments we attract and we can make apparent that having a range of bedrooms is important to our community.

**The city’s housing element has almost 2000 houses in the San Antonio corridor. What is the most significant (new) policy that will increase housing in Palo Alto? Other than in the San Antonio corridor, where else should we look for housing?**

The most significant policy Palo Alto has added is relaxing zoning around the El Camino Real area, it is important we allow for tall dense housing near downtown and California Avenue, being near public transit and businesses will help keep cars off the road.

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

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.

## RETAIL

**What is your position on ground floor retail? Should it be eliminated? Should permitted uses be revised? And should any changes apply to just downtown and Cal Ave or neighborhood centers as well?**

I support ground floor retail, but believe we should relax zoning and permitting to include medical offices, gyms, etc. and would support this being implemented city wide.

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

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

**Given that there are many empty retail business locations, would you support a retail business vacancy tax for properties that have been vacant for more than 1 year?**

I would only support it as a last resort. I believe we should attempt to support retail in other ways first such as relaxing zoning and permitting.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

**What two things would you prioritize to make Palo Alto and its neighborhoods more livable?**

Safer street infrastructure and relaxed zoning and permitting for small businesses.

**What is your vision for the Cubberley site?**

Safer street infrastructure and relaxed zoning and permitting for small businesses.

**Do you support any housing on the Cubberley site? If so, housing for whom?**

I would support housing at Cubberley, but my priority is Cubberley moving forward with breaking ground and not being delayed.

## TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

**The City wants people to use their cars less, yet not everyone can or wants to travel by bicycle and we have few public transportation options. How would you reorient traffic in our city?**

Work with VTA on expanding public transportation options and continue to invest in street infrastructure in high collision areas.

**In addition to Palo's Alto's plan for the San Antonio/Charleston area, Charleston Plaza in Mt View is planning a development that will bring hundreds of vehicle trips to the same area, which is already severely stressed. What mitigation measures can and should be done?**

We are going to need to heavily invest in street infrastructure in this area so people walking, biking, driving, or taking public transit are all safely separated to avoid collisions - this means separated and protected lanes with greenery and infrastructure improvements.

**Regarding Grade Separation, what is your personal design preference (underpass, hybrid, trench, etc) for each of the three locations?**

Having grown up in Palo Alto during the youth suicide clusters my first choice has always been the viaduct as it offers the most separation from trains and people. However, my top priority is that grade rail separation is completed and is not delayed as we need to protect our community, currently my first choice is the underpass, but we are still researching the possibilities for all three locations.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

**Anything else you'd like the residents to know?**

I'm endorsed by over 200 elected officials, community leaders, and neighbors like you, you can learn more at [katiecauseyforcouncil.com](http://katiecauseyforcouncil.com).