



# 2024 City Council Candidate Questions

## Doria Summa Responses

### EXPERIENCE

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

I have 17 years of experience working on appointed boards and commissions.

- Planning and Transportation Commission
  - Member from 2016 to present
  - Chair from January, 2023 to May, 2024
- 2030 Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee Member
  - Land Use Subcommittee for 2030 Comprehensive Plan
  - Natural Environment Subcommittee for 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- College Terrace Residents' Association, Board Member (2009-2016, President 2016)
  - College Terrace Neighborhood Traffic Calming Project
  - College Terrace Residential Parking Permit Program Committee
  - JJ&F / College Terrace Centre Task Force (2008-2014)
  - College Terrace Library Advocacy
- Citizen's Committee to update Palo Alto Tree Ordinance
- California Avenue Concept Plan workshops
- California Avenue Tree Replanting and Streetscape Project
- Palo Alto Art Center tree and greenspace preservation
- North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Working Group Member
- Development Center Advisory Group Community Representative

Through this work I have developed in-depth knowledge of the most important issues facing Palo Alto.

### GOALS

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

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.

**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.

## **HOUSING**

**What does the term "affordable housing" mean to you?**

After paying for housing, people have sufficient disposable income to pay for other needs. The criterion commonly used is that housing cost (rent or mortgage) should not exceed 1/3 of disposable income. On the other hand, deed-restricted, below-market-rate affordable housing is defined as units that are subsidized to allow people at lower income levels to afford housing costs.

**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?**

It is going to be difficult or impossible to meet HCD's requirements at all income levels. Our inclusionary zoning is at high income levels. We need to partner with affordable housing providers to build deed-restricted housing at lower income levels. We also need to count the ADUs to the extent that the state will allow us to do so.

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

This is largely out of our hands due to state laws. To the extent possible, we should encourage projects that provide a range of such options.

**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?**

We need to find housing opportunities across Palo Alto. One under-utilized area is the Stanford Research Park. I was the first person in a public hearing to propose that the city consider housing in the Stanford Research Park, and I still believe that this is a great opportunity.

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

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.

## **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 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.

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

I support the ongoing program to improve the cleanliness of downtown – we should extend that program to other business districts as needed. I support continuing the Retail Protection Ordinance and listening to small businesses to understand where updating the ordinance can help them 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 support considering the idea of a retail business vacancy tax. I am not convinced that one year is the right time frame given the wide variety of property owners from individual “mom and pop” ownership to large corporate landowners.

## **COMMUNITY LIFE**

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

1. I am worried that current state mandates will drastically reduce the livability of transition neighborhoods where mixed-use business and residential abut. We are in danger of losing control over managing these transitional areas – I will work hard to make sure that we protect liveability to the extent possible.
2. We need to grow the tree canopy in South Palo Alto, particularly in the San Antonio Area where we are transitioning to residential from commercial zoning.
3. I would like to better enforce traffic and red-light violations.

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

PAUSD owns most of the Cubberley site. I believe that the Council is close to purchasing acreage on the site from PAUSD. Cubberley is an great public resource – it needs to be renovated or rebuilt to provide an amazing community center with a variety of services from health to arts to education.

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

No.

## **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?**

I support bike lanes but it is important to me that they are safe for all levels of users. I would work with Stanford to expand Marguerite service to more parts of the city. While we should encourage biking and public transportation, we need to make sure that streets are safe and that traffic is well managed for residents who need to use cars.

### **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?**

I support additional bus service from VTA, especially to service the transitional housing East of 101. We should consider improved access to and from 101 as needed. To a large extent, it is the responsibility of the developer and the City of Mountain View to ensure that there are not disproportionate impacts – I will insist that staff monitor the impacts and ensure that the developer and Mountain View are held to their responsibilities.

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

Since Cal-Train ridership has dropped by more than 50% since this project was initiated, I support a thorough re-examination of all options that increase safety -- such as quad gates --without requiring hugely expensive and disruptive infrastructure projects that will also take private property. If we do need to proceed, my personal preference is either trenching or viaducting for the rail line. The Council has authorized additional design work on options for three crossings. I will closely evaluate the findings of this study, however, I do not support options that require taking private property.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

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

Throughout my many years of public service, I have been a consistent and tireless advocate for the interests of the residents and local businesses of Palo Alto. We enjoy a great quality of life in Palo Alto – this is the legacy of the foresight of many elected officials and citizen volunteers. I want to respect and maintain that legacy and make sure that we are making the right decisions to maintain this quality of life for future generations of Palo Altos residents and businesses.