



2026 City Council Candidate Questions

Gary Gechlik Responses

Experience / Vision / Goals

In the last four years what issues in Palo did you take a leadership role in that you are most proud of and what was the result?

No answer.

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

I attended Stanford Law School, and I am an active alumni.

What do you hope to accomplish in the next four years on Palo Alto City Council?

Serving on Council is a team sport, we have to work together and reduce the number of issues to the top priorities.

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

10 Story Max on new housing development

Focus on Firefighters, Police, EMS services

Housing, State Mandates, Local Control, Growth & Infrastructure

State government has increasingly limited cities' discretion over housing policy through laws including SB 79, the Housing Accountability Act, Density Bonus Law and other legislation. Palo Alto must simultaneously meet state housing requirements, accommodate substantial new housing and preserve the qualities residents value about their neighborhoods.

Where do you think the City should accommodate significantly greater housing density, and where—if anywhere—should it resist or seek to mitigate state requirements?

The area to be developed is East San Antonio Road. I believe the decisions are already set and will likely not change much.

How should Palo Alto ensure that housing growth is accompanied by appropriate infrastructure, transportation, parks and other public services?

Developers play, developers pay.

Palo Alto has a significant number of truly affordable deed restricted housing units that were built over decades for households making between 30-60% AMI. Currently, most projects are at such high AMIs that most families in lower income brackets need the subsidy to reside in

Palo Alto. As a councilmember, what solution would you put forward to create truly meaningful affordable housing in Palo Alto.

I am not interested in low income housing, I am interested in middle class housing. People who work and pay taxes need to get the advantage. I am sorry I disagree with the majority of people that are running, but young people that are working hard cannot afford to live in Palo Alto, so our city is going to decline over time because of an immature obsession with low income housing. It happened to Oakland, Detroit, Newark, it will happen eventually to Palo Alto. You serve the middle class that serves the city, that simple, or your city declines.

Palo Alto's Fiscal Solvency & the Future of Retail

Palo Alto entered FY 2026–27 facing a substantial General Fund deficit and adopted reductions affecting staffing and services, including library operations.

What do you believe are the underlying causes of Palo Alto's structural budget challenges?

We over spend on projects that other cities don't spend on. Saratoga has a 35 million dollar budget with half the people, so prorated that is 70 million dollars and there services are A-plus. They are thrifty. They don't discuss low income housing, they discuss fair housing, and they have beautiful facilities, like Montolvo and the Mountain Winery, world class.

Describe your approach to balancing the City's budget over the next five years. Which services should be protected from cuts? Where would you reduce spending, increase revenue, change employee costs, defer capital projects or find efficiencies? Please be specific.

Firefighting needs to be protected, then police. We live in a WildFire Zone. Saratoga and Los Gatos are safer communities by every metric, we need to support our Police Force.

The loss of community serving retail is a source of frustration to many residents. What if anything would you do to retain and encourage retail in Palo Alto, particularly in Midtown, the burned-out Philz and Bill's lot, Edgewood Plaza, Charleston Plaza, Town and Country, San Antonio Road, and along El Camino?

I am not an expert on retail, but the key is parking. Build free parking, retail will follow. Santa Row is having zero problem with retail.

Transportation

Growing numbers of people, including teens and children, ride personal electric mobility devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters on the city's streets, sidewalks, and trails in ways and at speeds considered dangerous.

At an April 2026 City/PAUSD discussion, Palo Alto police reported six collisions involving e-bikes and e-motos at PAUSD campuses in March 2026 alone, one involving major injuries. Police also reported increasing violations by student e-bike riders.

If you concerned about this issue, as a councilmember, what measures would you propose to make Palo Alto's streets, sidewalks and trails safe while not discouraging encouraging alternative transportation modalities?

E-Bikes and E-Scooters are dangerous, set speed limits and ticket.

Ticket those riding bikes and scooters on the pedestrian sidewalks, that simple.

Palo Alto has spent years studying how to separate streets from the Caltrain tracks at its rail crossings. The projects involve enormous costs, difficult engineering choices and potentially major impacts on nearby neighborhoods.

What outcome do you support for Palo Alto's rail crossings, and what tradeoffs are you willing—and unwilling—to accept regarding cost, neighborhood impacts, road closures, eminent domain, construction disruption and urban design? At what point should the City decide that a particular grade-separation alternative is simply too expensive?

We are talking a 1.4 Billion dollar project for all three, choose one crossing and work with CalTrain already.

Homelessness and Vehicle Dwellers

Palo Alto faces competing concerns surrounding people living in RVs and oversized vehicles on public streets, including the welfare of unhoused residents, neighborhood and business impacts, sanitation, public safety and the private use of public space.

What should Palo Alto's policy toward vehicle dwellers be? Describe the combination of enforcement, parking regulation, safe-parking programs, shelter, services and housing that you believe would be both humane and workable?

RV park at the duck pond. Once a city offers a service that is a paid for service, there is little legal recourse. An RV is a personal hotel on wheels, if they have an RV, they are not poor. Respect the law and those who have homes in the neighborhoods affected. \$20 per night is the going rate at an RV park with no hook-up, that is the long term solution.

Climate Goals and the Municipal Utilities

Palo Alto has ambitious climate goals and a municipally owned utility, giving the City unusual ability to influence electrification and energy use.

How aggressively should Palo Alto pursue building and vehicle electrification? How should the City balance climate goals against affordability, reliability, consumer choice and the financial consequences?

Climate equals Wildfire. In the next 20 years we are going to see a wildfire on the level of Pacific Palisades unless we take precautions. We are not going to see more the 4 cm of sea level rise.

As City policies encourage people to turn off the gas, an unintended consequence is that gas prices rise for those who retain gas. Some of the residents can't afford the steep cost of transitioning away from gas. How should the city address this conundrum?

I am not in the energy industry. I have no idea how to manage forward contracts in this area, and I doubt other candidates understand the details of gas price regulation. The city made a specific policy that was not under my watch, dealing with the challenge will require outside council.

To date, 28 years have passed since the 1998 flood event of record and little to nothing has been done at the Pope-Chaucer bridge to prevent creek overflows into the Crescent Park and Duveneck/St Francis neighborhoods. How would you determine what the hold-up has been at SFCJPA, what would you do to expedite implementing a solution, and how would you assure CPNA and DSFNA residents that help is on the way?

I am not an expert in hydrology. This is a complex area of civil engineering. The first step is to recognize the scope of the problem, the average non scientist is just guessing, and any credible

scientific person would ask for a field report with an expert in the area of hydrology with input from the state as this is an area that touches and concerns a Riparian.

Public Safety, Technology and Civil Liberties

Palo Alto's use of automated license plate readers has generated debate over the value of technology in solving crimes versus privacy, data sharing and government surveillance.

What principles should govern Palo Alto's use of surveillance technology? Discuss where you would draw the line between legitimate public-safety tools and unacceptable government surveillance, and what oversight, transparency, warrant, retention and data-sharing rules do you believe should apply?

I am for protecting human life above all. Flock cameras fit into that equation. These cameras save lives and are the only way to bring the crime down in Palo Alto to the level of Saratoga and Los Gatos. If you want to live with less crime, you have to accept that remote monitoring is part of the future of crime control.