

2026 City Council Candidate Questions

Homelessness and Vehicle Dwellers

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?

BRYNA CHANG

A humane and workable policy requires simultaneous action on enforcement, services, and housing:

- **Change our parking ordinances so that they are enforceable:** Our current prohibition of parking in one place for more than 72 hours is not enforceable because it requires proof that a vehicle has been in one place for 3 consecutive days. To protect bike paths, improve dangerous views for drivers, allow space for ingress and egress into business and residential driveways, and prevent hazardous materials from going into waterways and city streets, Palo Alto should update its overnight parking ordinance to prohibit RV parking from 2am-5am.
- **Cost-effective signage for new regulations:** Rather than posting signs on every Palo Alto street, our parking restrictions can be noticed with fewer signs at all entrances to Palo Alto.
- **Income-verified RV parking permits and safe parking:** Any new ordinance prohibiting overnight RV parking should be paired with an RV permit program so that RV dwellers who qualify can park in designated areas not adjacent to homes and businesses or designated safe parking spaces. These permits should also require that RV dwellers agree to a good neighbor policy.
- **Transitional Services:** RV parking permits should be paired with services such as robust case management, mental health counseling, substance use services, and employment assistance.
- **Develop Deeply Affordable Housing:** We must prioritize deeply subsidized housing at 30–60% Area Median Income (AMI), even if this means fewer affordable housing units at higher income levels. Without this housing stock, transitional housing cannot work because there is nowhere for individuals to move afterward.
- **Foster Regional Collaboration:** Homelessness cannot be solved city by city. Partner with Santa Clara County to coordinate services, secure regional funding, and expand safe parking and shelter capacity.

YUDY DENG

I agree with residents that the proposed pilot was the wrong approach, and I'm glad the Council rejected it. We already have laws addressing illegal dumping, unsafe vehicles, harassment, and threats to public safety. We should enforce those laws before creating an expensive new pilot that could take too long to address what residents are experiencing right now.

At the same time, enforcement alone isn't enough. We need a humane approach for people living in their vehicles. The City should work with the County, faith organizations, and community partners to provide safe parking with basic services and connections to housing and other support.

We can be compassionate while still setting clear expectations. Residents deserve safe, clean neighborhoods, and people experiencing homelessness deserve a real path toward stability.

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not answer.

GARY GECHLIK

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.

RAYMOND LEE GOINS

My policy around vehicle dwellers would be one that sees the person in the vehicle, and not the circumstances that the person finds themselves in., I don't believe in one blanket approach because everyone's situation is different, and if we treat people as if they are an individual and not a class of people. For those workers who are living in their vehicles because. The commute is too much, I think we need to emphasize creating affordable housing for them, so they can live in the community they work in, and not be subjected to having to live in their vehicle. I think we should develop a safe parking site for those who can only afford to live in their vehicle. Affordable housing is a different term for those who come from different economic brackets.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

Public streets should not become permanent, unmanaged RV parks.

ED LAUING

This is a problem nationally and we see it in many areas of our region. My plan is this:

- + Restrict lived-in RV parking to non-residential areas for a select number of needy, income-verified families in specially permitted transitional-housing-areas.
- + Extend the city's definition of "residential areas" immediately to include multi-family projects.
- + Other than #1 above, post a ban on large overnight RVs in the city
- + Continue ongoing outreach to county and federal governments to find space for RV dwellers.

VICKI VEENKER

People living in vehicles on our streets is the city's most intractable issue. Residents and businesses are understandably frustrated. We have to do more – and faster; and we're making progress.

First, a couple weeks ago we made sure that all residential streets in the city will be treated the same, and closed loopholes where RVs had been allowed on some streets where people live. That won't be the case going forward.

Second, some RV dwellers would otherwise be unsheltered, while others use the RV as a second home when they drive in to work here. We don't have the same moral or legal obligation to take care of those having other shelter, so we have directed staff to get better data about who is who, so that we can disallow those who have other shelter. That will also become clear through the permit program. We are also contacting major employers to assist and I have personally had at least one encouraging conversation on that front.

Third, for those who would otherwise be homeless, we are starting a permit program where they can park in designated spaces while we work to get them into housing. We are also working to add more off-street safe parking lots, and I am pursuing a strong lead on one such lot at present.