



2026 City Council Candidate Questions

Housing Density

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?

BRYNA CHANG

Density belongs along commercial corridors and near transit — El Camino Real, California Avenue, University Avenue, and San Antonio Road, and areas near Caltrain stations. These areas are walkable, bikeable, and have good transit access, making them appropriate for density in a way that can genuinely reduce car dependence. Density also belongs in our GM/ROLM (General Manufacturing and Research, Office and Light Manufacturing) zones where the parcels are much larger and can accommodate the greater efficiencies of scale for affordable housing. Furthermore, converting office and manufacturing to housing reduces Palo Alto's jobs:housing imbalance.

For the future, I also support collaborating with Stanford to develop additional housing in the Stanford Research Park and Stanford Shopping Center areas — proximity to major employment makes that housing attractive to nearby workers and could meaningfully reduce commute traffic.

Palo Alto should try to mitigate against state requirements that would place density in low-scale residential neighborhoods far from transit and services. We should especially avoid increasing density west of Foothill Expressway and east of 101, where development would increase wildfire risk and have greater environmental impacts. The most effective tool we have is a legally compliant, state-approved Housing Element — one that proactively directs density where we want it, rather than ceding control to developers through Builder's Remedy. We must also do comprehensive area planning now for growth corridors — San Antonio, Fabian/Transport, and El Camino — that integrates housing with retail, parks, bike infrastructure, and safe school routes from the outset, before sites are developed and those opportunities are lost.

YUDY DENG

I believe Palo Alto should remain in the driver's seat when it comes to how our city grows. We have to meet our housing obligations, but we should be proactive about deciding where new housing makes sense rather than simply reacting to one-size-fits-all rules from Sacramento.

I support focusing more housing near transit and along areas like El Camino, California Avenue, Downtown, and other places where jobs, businesses, and infrastructure already exist. ADUs are also a great way to add homes gradually without dramatically changing neighborhoods, and my Green Lights approach would make them easier and faster to approve.

Growth should be thoughtful. We need to consider traffic, schools, utilities, trees, neighborhood character, and public spaces alongside housing rather than after the fact.

I also think Palo Alto needs to be much more active in Sacramento. We should work with our legislators and neighboring cities to protect local flexibility, address unintended consequences in state housing laws, and push for funding to support the infrastructure that comes with growth. The more effectively we plan locally, the stronger our position is to maintain meaningful local control.

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not answer.

GARY GECHLIK

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

RAYMOND LEE GOINS

I think that Palo Alto should be a leader in how we build a scale with our access to enormous wealth.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

I would focus greater density on suitable commercial and parking parcels in the San Antonio Road area, selected portions of El Camino Real, and appropriate sites near transit. Building scale should reflect each site's infrastructure, access, and relationship to neighboring homes.

I favor site plans that make better use of larger parcels, with courtyards, open space, and appropriate transitions, rather than relying on substantially greater height.

I would use enforceable development standards, infrastructure planning, and negotiation to protect single-family neighborhoods. I also support voluntary accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, and other lawful housing options.

I would pursue a state-approved alternative plan for implementing SB 79 and support legislative changes and well-founded legal challenges with clear objectives and budgets.

ED LAUING

We have already created housing sites in massive new spaces in PA led by the Housing Committee which I chaired. Notable new areas are the *El Camino Real Focus Area* and the San Antonio Corridor. With reference to new state laws like SB79, we have chosen to do an Alternative Plan over the next few years. A Housing plan is underway for the downtown area which will certainly include substantial height and density.

VICKI VEENKER

We should accommodate greater density along our transit corridors like El Camino Real and San Antonio Road, and in the University Avenue and California Avenue areas. The El Camino Real Focus Areas are a very good example of this.

Because the SB 79 areas include low density residential areas, especially near the San Antonio Road and California Avenue stations, I believe we should do an Alternative Plan that relocates density to sites where the context is more compatible.