



2026 City Council Candidate Questions

Affordable Housing

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.

BRYNA CHANG

We cannot meet our HCD affordable housing goals through inclusionary zoning alone. Much of our low-income housing will need to come from 100% affordable projects developed in partnership with nonprofit developers, supplemented by ADUs. Palo Alto's Measure K provides some funding, but we must develop additional revenue sources and develop philanthropic sources of funding.

Public subsidies must be reserved for households that genuinely need them — primarily those earning below 80% AMI, with priority for households at 30–60% AMI. I oppose the misallocation of limited affordable housing funds toward market-rate units.

I would also address the often-overlooked problem of naturally affordable housing: the Housing Element upzoning was targeted at older buildings, which house most of Palo Alto's less-expensive naturally affordable units. New market-rate development will replace this stock with more expensive housing. We must be honest about this tradeoff and work to ensure that the net effect of our housing policies does not harm the very residents we are trying to help. When the city helps fund affordable developments directly, we have more control over unit sizes — and I will push to ensure that city-funded projects include family-sized units, particularly three or more bedrooms, where FAR exemptions and other incentives can help make larger units financially viable for developers.

YUDY DENG

For me, this starts with the people who make Palo Alto work. Teachers, childcare workers, service workers, nonprofit staff, and public employees should have a real chance to live in the community they serve.

We also need to be honest about what “affordable” means. Housing at 80% or 100% of Area Median Income can still be out of reach for many working families. We need more deeply affordable housing in the 30% to 60% AMI range.

I would prioritize permanently affordable housing, particularly on public land near transit, schools, and jobs. I also want to make 100% affordable projects faster and less expensive to build by reducing unnecessary fees and creating a much clearer path through City Hall.

And we can't just focus on new construction. We need to preserve the affordable housing we already have and prevent displacement.

There's no single answer here. It will take public investment, nonprofit and private partners, and some difficult conversations. I'm ready to bring people together, find common ground, and get more of these projects going.

HENRY ETZKOWITZ

Did not answer.

GARY GECHLIK

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.

RAYMOND LEE GOINS

First I would create a rent stabilization so that the property owner can't continue to raise your rent over the years, I believe that your rent should stay what you initially rent the property for without worrying about the landlord increasing it over a time period. I also would have a progressive tax on business that make over a certain amount to offset these costs for families that can't afford the rent. I think that we have a moral obligation to give families an opportunity to live and thrive in our city, so they can change their generational outcome.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

I would prioritize long-term, deed-restricted housing for households earning 30% to 60% of area median income or less, including seniors, people with disabilities, and lower-income families.

I would pursue public and nonprofit partnerships like Mitchell Park Place, use eligible public land through long-term ground leases, and seek county funding and tax-credit financing alongside local investment. I would also evaluate acquiring and rehabilitating existing apartments to preserve affordability and prevent displacement. Parks and protected open space should remain protected.

I would test a small, capped program that helps willing homeowners create affordable ADUs in exchange for enforceable affordability restrictions, with a nonprofit managing tenant eligibility and the units. The program should proceed only where its costs and participation make it competitive with other affordable housing options.

Each proposal should disclose rents, income limits, family-sized units, public subsidies, the length of affordability restrictions, and completion risks. Any needed rental assistance or operating subsidies must have an identified funding source.

ED LAUING

TRULY AFFORDABLE HOUSING is the fundamental housing need in the city. We need to lead efforts to develop sources of serious funding for this core need. The units built must be deed-restricted units which are the hardest to get built. This often requires developers who specialize in affordable housing.

VICKI VEENKER

A little less than a third of recently permitted units in Palo Alto are affordable. Only about 18% are Very Low Income units (and even less are Moderate and Low Income units).

To create truly affordable housing, we should continue to seek funding partners and experienced affordable housing development partners, like Alta, Eden and others. Recent affordable housing projects were made possible by funding partnerships with a broad set of funders, including philanthropists like Sobrato, county and state funding (hopefully our options will increase if we achieve a Prohousing Designation), and city funding or land. If Proposition 1 passes, additional state funding may become available.

We have a lot of work to do, but things are looking up. I have had the pleasure of cutting quite a few ribbons this year – including for 100% affordable Mitchell Park Place and Project Homekey; and we broke ground for an all-affordable project at 3001 ECR and a mixed-rate project across the street with BMR units. Alta Housing submitted an application for an all-affordable project on a downtown parking lot and we will be issuing an RFP for another one near Matadero Creek on the old Fry's site.