

# Questionnaire for City Council Candidates 2009

## Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN)

*To the readers:* The intended audience for this questionnaire is normal residents who are interested in the issues (versus activists who are deeply enmeshed) and the candidates were instructed to respond appropriately (detail and length). The candidates have diverse backgrounds and the questions are intended to be open enough to allow them to demonstrate their knowledge, experience, priorities and perspectives while being constrained enough to allow you to make comparisons between the candidates. The questions are not intended to allow safe, generic responses that reveal little. The candidates' responses will stay in the same order relative to each other, but we rotated whose response is first. Candidates have the option of including clickable links (hyperlinks) in their responses and of making the name at the beginning of each response clickable.

For more information on the candidates and their positions, you are encouraged to visit their individual websites, which can be found at:

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

*Terminology:* "the City" refers to the government of the City of Palo Alto.

### 1. Reason for running: What are your primary reasons for running for City Council?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

My independence will offer a financial voice really needed by the City. The Council needs a diversity of skills. There are five open seats and you have five votes. I am the finance guy that will work well any other four candidates you choose. I know how to cooperate and I know how to get things done.

I own and operate (Treasury Advocates) in downtown Palo Alto. My wife Susan Gray and I have three children (Catherine age 10, and twins Michael and Julia, age 7,)

I am committed to doing the right thing for the environment (A Green Future is a Golden Future), and fiercely protecting our quality life (I moved here 22 years ago for a reason, and our neighborhoods and schools must not be eroded.)

Palo Alto must elevate financial discipline to the top of the agenda if we really want to assure balance and make progress on neglected infrastructure. Applying benchmarking to the budget and demonstrating best management practices must be achieved. I will invite more citizen participation.

I love Palo Alto! I've lived here for more than 20 years. My wife and I have three children in local schools. We enjoy living and working in Palo Alto and are committed to protecting the environment, preserving the quality of life, and making fiscal decisions that enable us to support these goals.

The foundation for my campaign is based on three evolving principles:

- Encourage community participation in government
- Financial stewardship
- Environmental responsibility — A Green Future is a Golden Future

I believe that by encouraging citizen participation, we will gain greater community understanding of our costs of being governed. And together, we can make decisions that will positively impact the future of our City.

The Council's ability to represent the needs of Palo Alto will be enhanced by greater community connection. The Council is a policy-making group, and the formulation of policy is a dynamic (ever changing to meet present and future concerns) conversation. It is essential to act together if we want to protect the rich American tradition of representative government.

By respecting the different points of view of our diverse community, we can find a balance as we honor and strengthen the points of agreement. And then, from a unified vision, forward progress will be assured.

I am convinced that financial stewardship and care for our environment can complement each other. Palo Alto has a rich history of innovation: We will discover the Gold in Green. We will preserve what we like best about our beautiful City and our quality of life.

As a Certified Public Accountant and business consultant for Fortune 500 companies (many as large as, if not larger than, the City of Palo Alto) and hospitals nationwide, I can offer a solid set of financial skills that are an integral ingredient in the formation of an effective City Council. I believe a financially balanced city government not only protects our quality of life, but is also key to protecting our personal balance sheets (i.e., home values). Fiscal balance plays a vital role in my vision for Palo Alto.

As an experienced financial leader, known for my unique blend of pragmatism and idealism, I will be a voice for financial discipline. I have no conflicting special interests. I am free to truly represent the best interests of our community.

I also want to do everything possible to support youth services, and that includes the libraries and other valuable programs that the City Council can implement to impact positively our schools and children's futures.

While we can't dictate the future, we can establish traditions and programs that will bring forth the greatest good for our community.

Please explore my website, and learn more about citizen participation, financial stewardship, and Green innovations. I welcome hearing from you and hope you will let me know your vision and concerns for Palo Alto. I am here to be a voice for our community.

## **2. Experience:**

*Non-incumbents:* Describe your personal experience with Palo Alto City government and recent issues that have come before the Council (Public Hearings). What was your role? (For example, did you send an email, speak to the Council, lead a group of citizens, etc.?) How extensively were you involved?

*Incumbent (Klein):* What have been your major initiatives on the Council? Describe your role and the results.

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

I own and operate Treasury Advocates, a business consulting practice, in downtown Palo Alto. I am trained as a Certified Public Accountant, and am a financial adviser to Not-for-profit hospitals throughout the nation. I know how to step the tide of beauracracy growth, and find ways for competing interests to cooperate. I also have a specialty tax practice in mergers and acquisitions.

After working as a Certified Public Accountant as an auditor and consultant, I was part of the financial leadership that built the financial operations of the Lucile Packard Childrens Hospital at Stanford from the ground up. I have learned the nuances and patience needed to navigate through very large beauracracies, and deliver solid solutions that served the greatest good. The core principle in my business is to find the points of agreement and strengthen them, and to face tough issues head-on, so that respect can be retained for varying points of view.

**3. Potential conflicts of interest:** The City Council can be hampered in its deliberations when members have to recuse themselves because of conflicts of interest. Please identify potential conflicts that you may have (excluding your personal residence) in ongoing or forthcoming issues.

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

My wife has worked in the administration of the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital for nearly 20 years. This would recuse me from any decisions impacting the Children's Hospital, but it would not reduce my enthusiasm for the great work and life-saving services provided by the Hospital. My opinion is that we are extremely lucky to have such a world-class pediatric facility in our own back yard, and there are many communities that would pay dearly to have such an incredible neighbor.

**4. Deficit:** The City has a large structural deficit. A large part of its costs are for employees, both current and retired. How do you propose to contain those costs? If you advocate reductions in the workforce, which services would be affected? Do you advocate an alternative way(s) to contain costs?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

My campaign mantra has been to set priorities, and from those collective priorities, exercise fiscal discipline. Jim Keene has indicated a willingness to work with council in reducing services, if that is what we requested, so the council just needs to set its priorities, and then issue some clear instructions. I have a personal bias for preserving public safety and children's services. I am sorry to know that our lack of financial discipline in previous years when funds were more available is going to come back to haunt us and cause some pain in the future. There are many people who will work on this with the highest integrity and commitment to finding the solutions that will serve the greatest good. As Jim Keene has said, even the smallest service cuts will cause a vocal uproar. We will just have to stand together and know in our hearts that any reductions are made with an endless commitment to fairness.

**5. Business license tax:** What is your position on a business license tax, such as the one on the November ballot?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

What is the extra value that we are planning on providing to the people we tax. If we can deliver value, then the tax should be supported. If it is just another way for our City to put its hands in our pockets, and avoid fiscal discipline, it will not be supported by the community – which I am a part of.

**6. Utilities Funds:** Currently a portion of the City's Utility Fund is paid into the General Fund. What do you think are appropriate levels for such payments?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

We must build a firewall between the City Utility Funds and the General Fund, otherwise rate payers are just being taxed in another form. The City needs to live within its own means. Sure, I've heard the rationalization of charging \$900,000 to the Utility for land that the City has

contracted for \$1, however we need to look and see if the original purpose of the favorable lease was intended to benefit the general fund, or was it to serve the greater community with land needed for a water reservoir? Even if the funds are properly divided, we need to be more forthcoming and offer details. Where there is smoke, there is fire -- meaning that the rate payers probably have some legitimate points, and we should shine the light of transparency on this topic with all due haste. We have let suspicions about this topic fester for too long, and my roll-up-the-sleeves approach will deliver great value.

**7. High Speed Rail (HSR):** What is your position on HSR, including undergrounding? If HSR is built, should the City request a station? What should be the City's role?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

I attended the "teach-in", walked the neighborhood advocating a "quiet" design, and have a lot at stake since I border the Cal Train corridor. It would be unconscionable to have an elevated track divide our town. We have held very strict zoning standards for ourselves since the beginning of time, and then have that all tossed away with one project would be beyond injurious. The principle of "Shared Community Benefit and Share Community Cost" must be applied. Sure, there are great benefits to the HSR, but to have the costs land so abruptly and disasterously on the neighborhoods, is just not acceptable.

**8. Retail:** Palo Alto has multiple business districts and neighborhood centers. The health of a retail area is dependent on far more than just individual stores. Although cities cannot provide the level of management found in malls, other cities do more than Palo Alto. What should the City do to support the retail sector?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

Follow the best practices of other towns and get our act together. We have several neighboring cities that can show us the way.

**9. High-density housing:** What is your perspective on the major forces pushing for high-density housing?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

Stick with the Comprehensive Plan. We must not dilute our schools and infrastructure. We are a collection of neighborhoods – not just the canvas for some urban planner.

**10. Development impacts:** The City has been criticized for allowing developers to understate the impacts of their projects, and thus avoid paying for measures to reduce the problems created. How much of a problem is this? What changes are needed?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

We need to honor the Comprehensive Plan. Any exceptions to the Plan can only be made where the benefit to the "greater good" is obviously demonstrated. The "swiss cheese" specialty zoning that we have allowed is diluting our schools, and degrading neighborhoods. I know we must grow, but we must have objective and empirical standards to assure that project don't just mitigate their impact, but actually provide a net gain to our community. Our City must not hand over its destiny to outside forces.

**11. Affordable Housing:** The City's current approach to providing affordable housing relies heavily on requiring new housing developments to include affordable units. What is your assessment of this approach? What changes would you make?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

Making this a regional goal would remove some artificial boundaries, and allow greater regional cooperation. I would follow the lead of those that have worked on this topic for many years, and then try to find additional funding for the most innovative ideas. Fairness would be my guide. I am inspired to learn more about this opportunity.

**12. Planned Community (PC) Zoning:** Planned Community zoning is controversial because it is perceived as being routinely abused. What is your perspective on the use of this zoning? Use specific examples to illustrate your points.

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

The guiding principle would be to not dilute our schools, and unjustly impact bordering neighborhoods. We need to look at the dissatisfaction that has followed some of the previous projects and prevent some of those errors. As a practice, this has been manipulated to place larger projects than the authors of our Comprehensive Plan ever imagined. Any mechanism that can be used as an “end-run” around the will of the residents has to be thoroughly reevaluated.

**13. Stanford Hospital Project:** The expansion of the Stanford Hospital will have substantial impacts on Palo Alto, most significantly increased traffic and requirements for additional housing. What do you think is appropriate for the City to require of Stanford as part of this project?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

I have to recuse myself from this issue. However, most towns would pay money to have such a world-class facility located in their back yard.

**14. Civic Engagement:** What is your interpretation of the term “civic engagement”? What are your priorities for improvements in this area?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

Cast a broader net. We have a history of gathering friends together in committees and then calling it community involvement. Citizen participation requires a constant outreach, and then a real honoring of the information gathered.

**15. Neighborhood Associations:** In what ways have neighborhood associations been beneficial to the City? What, if anything, would you change about that relationship?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

They could become the main structure for the Civic Engagement of question 14. We must cast our nets further, be sure to include all stakeholders, not just the vocal ones. Finally, when we get feedback, we must act with respect and not just proceed with what we wanted to do all along. (Yes, this is an observation of some historical behaviour).

**16. Meeting Effectiveness:** Council meetings often run to well after midnight, and decisions are deferred (continued) or referred (sent back for further consideration). What would you do to improve the effectiveness of Council meetings?

[D] Tim Gray : [www.vote4Gray.com/](http://www.vote4Gray.com/)

Set the priorities and stick with the priorities. No more community theatre. I will work on many committees and be prepared to be decisive an the Council Meetings. I have heard that not every Council Member shares the workload of these meetings, and may explain why more deliberation goes on in the Council Chambers.

**17. Balancing Issues:** A major focus of the current Council has been environmental issues, especially those related to Global Warming. Using this as a specific example, explain how you think Council and staff should allocate time and effort to the many issues that come before them.

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It is true that a “Green Future is a Golden Future” and Environmental Stewardship is close to the top of my list, however our immediate financial future needs our attention. If we don’t find the right balance, we will be denied the opportunity to invest in projects that make our City green. Collectively we need to set the priorities, and then doggedly refuse to get side-tracked on items that are not on the list. There is much comment, true or not, that we got side-tracked on “petty” items and nearly got “Railroaded.” (Literally.)

**18. (Optional) Unasked Question:** If there is a question you think we should have asked, ask and answer it.

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