

## **Adrian Fine Replies to 2016 City Council Candidate Questions**

- 1. Reason for running:** What are the top three goals you want to achieve in the next four years on the city council?

I'm running for city council because I see so many opportunities for our city. Palo Alto has incredible intellectual, economic, environmental, and historic resources, and I want to make sure that current and future generations have even greater opportunities than I had growing up here.

My top three goals are 1) solving our traffic and parking programs by investing in sustainable transportation and transit, 2) creating housing choices in the right places, and 3) creating a natural and urban environment we can be proud of. This can be achieved through our innovative, inclusive, and compassionate spirit.

I was born in Palo Alto in 1986, and I've spent my entire life here: learning at Ohlone, JLS and Gunn; biking in our neighborhoods; and benefitting from the Palo Alto spirit. I'm currently a renter, recently engaged, and I want to raise my family in Palo Alto. I want to make sure that our exceptional quality of life is protected and improved for current and future residents.

- 2. Experience:**

*Non-incumbents:* Describe your personal experience with Palo Alto City government and recent issues that have come before public hearings at the city council or other board and commissions. 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 (Kniss):* What have been your major initiatives on the Council? Describe your role and the results.

I serve as chair on the Planning and Transportation Commission and as a non-voting member of the Citizen's Advisory Commission for the Comp Plan update. My educational and professional background is in city planning and technology. In both of my roles with the City, I see my primary job as listening to residents and stakeholders, considering plans and developments in light of the city's municipal code/comp plan, and ensuring that Palo Alto plans intelligently for the future.

On the planning commission, I have recommended and improved initiatives such as: local retail protection, residential parking preference program, the transportation management association, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a new and efficient solid-waste facility, safe streets, and accessory dwelling units. I have also provided input on the comprehensive plan update, and one of my goals is to speed up the process so we have an up-to-date and enforceable comp plan.

Across numerous projects and issues, I have pushed staff for higher-quality data to help the Council make their final decision. I have asked for comparisons to nearby cities, and I have also provided input on projects in nearby cities that will affect us. On these projects, I have focused on their impacts and opportunities for Palo Alto.

Over my life here in Palo Alto, I have spoken at council meetings on a number of issues that matter to me: the Mayfield project in my neighborhood of College Terrace, in support of increased bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and expansion of city parks.

**3. Affordable Housing:** Regarding building affordable housing, we are faced with several problems: lack of land, lack of interest on developers' part and the cost (one unit costs \$400-600,000). Please address:

- How do we get such housing built?
- Can we even build enough housing to satisfy demand?
- Should the City increase development fees to fund more affordable housing?

I do not believe it is practical or our responsibility to provide housing for everyone who wants to live in Palo Alto, but we can expand opportunities for seniors and young families to maintain a diverse community. We can do this while protecting our single family neighborhoods from impacts.

Yes the city should increase development fees to fund affordable housing, and we are currently exploring by how much on the Planning Commission. Our current fees are comparable to nearby municipalities, and given Palo Alto's desirability/profit margins for developments, we can increase fees. However, we should not increase fees to the point where development is no longer feasible in Palo Alto, because then we will not be able to produce on-site units or collect in-lieu fees for affordable housing.

At the core, affordable housing requires subsidies from market-rate housing, and with such high land costs in Palo Alto, the best way to produce this subsidy is by creating realistic densities near transit and services. In order to make housing more affordable, we also have to adapt our zoning code to enable more types of housing units such as small units, cottage units, co-housing spaces, and rental units. This will allow people of different economic circumstances to choose the housing type that fits them best, which will reduce overall market pressure.

I am a strong supporter of Measure A--the county bond to provide funding for subsidized housing. I also believe that Palo Alto needs to do a better job fighting for affordable housing funds across the county; funding sources for veterans, workforce housing, or special needs housing.

**4. High-density housing:** What are your thoughts on "high-density housing" in Palo Alto? How much should be built and for whom?

High density is a loaded word. In San Francisco and Manhattan it may mean 30-50 story towers. In Palo Alto high density means 3 and 4 stories. I favor densities of this kind near services, transit, and shopping--areas that provide opportunities for walking, biking, and shopping locally. The prime areas to focus on are along El Camino, University Avenue, and California Avenue.

To manage growth effectively, we need to use Coordinated Area Plans so that community stakeholders can come together, plan for needed investments in amenities and infrastructure, and help design the future look and feel of these areas. The South of Forest Area plan (SOFA) is a successful model of Palo Altans working together to design new housing, designate amenities to be built, and create design guidelines - we should refine and re-use this model.

I also favor exploring opportunities for Stanford to provide more housing on their lands, such as Stanford Mall or the Research Park.

**5. Jobs/Housing Imbalance:** Office creation is outpacing housing development. Please address:

- How much, where *and what kind of* office space can Palo Alto sustain?
- Do you support extending the annual office space development cap?
- Should the City consider placing a moratorium on new office development?

Palo Alto has the nation's worst jobs/housing imbalance, and it's because we have spent decades overbuilding office space instead of housing. I believe we need to flip this prioritization, and the upcoming zoning ordinance update is an opportunity to do so. We also need to invest in transportation, which is the link between jobs and housing. By doing these two things, we can reduce the imbalance, and we can also lessen its impacts

Going forward, it may be appropriate to meter new office growth based on a link to housing, ie, office projects should only be allowed if they reduce the jobs/housing balance. I do not support a blunt moratorium on office growth - partially because the majority of office impacts come from *existing* office projects, which we should address, but also because such a moratorium is a serious threat to our economy. Additionally, the office and traffic problems are regional, so even if we do pass a moratorium, office growth will occur in Menlo Park or Mountain View, and then Palo Alto will suffer from cut-through traffic.

Until the comp plan is passed, office growth should be limited by the downtown office cap of 50,000 square feet per year. This is a policy I refined on the Planning Commission, and although this policy does not address the direct traffic and parking impacts of office, it does limit the amount of these impacts.

What worries me is that the office cap does not affect new projects which are coming online, particularly the Stanford Hospital expansion, and the city should take immediate steps to create a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan for the site. We should also coordinate shuttle and other transit services with the expansion.

**6. Growth:** There has been a lot of discussion about the demand for housing as well as potential impacts, and how fast it should increase in Palo Alto. How does this compromise the quality of life of local residents, including school enrollment, and what mitigations do you support?

I support more housing in Palo Alto and support the goals and policies in our adopted Housing Element. I favor the kind and location for housing addressed in my answers to questions 3 and 4. I believe that providing more affordable opportunities for younger residents, families, and seniors wishing to downsize to more walkable areas enhances and does not "compromise" our quality of life. Additionally, creating housing near transportation improves the natural environment.

PAUSD enrollment has declined for five years in a row, and I think we can sustain reasonable growth, particularly if focused around supporting young families. PAUSD schools are the crown jewel of this city, and in order to support our schools, we need to make it possible for families to locate here and send their kids to schools. In the long term, we need to look at demographic trends and determine if and when we would need a new school, and plan accordingly.

I am running for city council because I want to make sure that residents continue to have a great quality of life, but as a public servant, my job will also be to consider the needs of future residents.

7. **Cumulative Impacts:** Commercial projects are evaluated on an individual basis, without looking at the cumulative impact on intersections, traffic and spillover parking in neighborhoods. Many traffic studies seem to have a finding of “no impact,” yet traffic continues to get worse. What changes in the way we evaluate projects would you favor?

I support cumulative impact studies, and I have repeatedly called for them on projects that come before the Planning Commission. I believe we need to make “traffic impact” a standard for development. Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) is useful for reducing overall traffic, but Level of Service (LOS) is also important to evaluate traffic at specific intersections/thoroughfares.

As a bicyclist, I am particularly interested in multi-modal level of service (MMLOS), which measure impacts for cars, bikes, pedestrians, and other roadway users.

8. **Local Review:** What is your opinion of the Budget Trailer Bill 707’s (or similar bills) by-right exemption from environmental review?

Budget trailer bill 707 - which did not pass - *did not provide exemptions from environmental review*. It was intended to exempt projects with 20%+ affordable from local appeals. Under 707, projects still had to meet local comprehensive plans, zoning, and environmental review - but if they met a set of circumstances (<http://www.hcd.ca.gov/housing4agrowingca.html>), local appeals would not have been allowed.

9. **Retail:** How would you support local retail? Specifically, how would you protect, support and possibly even extend ground-floor retail in our commercial and neighborhood commercial areas? How would you enforce existing laws?

My first job was at Accent Arts on Cal Ave, which is now closing, and I have a deep appreciation for our local retailers. The retail environment is changing all over America, and over time more shopping will be done on the internet and via home delivery of items including food. I believe we should be asking experts in the retail area to advise us on what is realistic to expect and how

On the planning commission, I helped create ordinances which prohibited conversion of ground-floor retail into office, and I also helped improve restrictions on chain stores. These two ordinances, later passed by council, are important steps to protect Palo Alto’s retail.

I support mixed use developments combining retail and housing. But location is critical because no matter what we wish for, retail is a very competitive market and retailers want access to the largest number of customers.

Finally, we should make business easier for our local and small retailers. We should streamline the permitting process for local retail businesses, and I’d like the city to provide more flexible retail requirements such as smaller shops, “maker” spaces, shared storefronts, and simpler signage requirements.

- 10. Accessory Dwelling Units (aka “Granny Units”):** Do you support zoning changes to enable the creation of additional second units, such as reduced minimum lot size, removal of parking requirements? If so, which ones? How do ensure these units don’t simply become short-term (Airbnb-type) rentals?

Accessory Dwelling Units are one piece of the “housing puzzle”, and done correctly, they have minimal impacts while providing needed housing

I support developing guidelines that encourage more secondary units, including: reducing minimum lot size requirements (which will allow more properties to have an ADU), removing parking requirements in RPP zones (since parking is already regulated), or allowing interior ADUs (aka “Lily-Pad units” where a part of the home is sectioned off and has a kitchenette).

ADUs can provide benefits to families in the main dwelling unit (money) and can provide more affordable housing options especially for young workers, seniors, and people with disabilities. I believe we can develop rules that prohibit uses other than for full time residents in these units. On the Airbnb issue, I want the city to work with the company and create fair regulations that limit the number of times per month a property can turn over. We can also potentially tax these short-term rentals for other housing/general fund needs.

- 11. Parks:** The current Comprehensive Plan calls for the city to maintain 4 acres of in-town park space for every 1,000 residents. The actual ratio is now below this ratio as our population has grown. What should we do?

Many years ago, Palo Alto made the wise decision to preserve the Foothills and Baylands, and use the space in-between for our city. Today, we have no extra land for parks, and so we must use innovative approaches to create new types of park/open spaces.

For new developments, we should implement an “urban green spaces plan”, which could require things like publically accessible rooftop gardens or pocket parks on the street. Particularly in South Palo Alto and along El Camino, every development should be examined for potential green spaces, even if it’s just a small grassy area with benches.

Existing and future parks should be used more efficiently. Some parks need shade structures, while others could have fields or tennis courts striped for a wider range of uses, such as pickleball or cricket.

Finally, we have to improve connections to our parks. The simplest and most economical approach is to develop comprehensive bike and ped access to these existing parks and areas.

- 12. Dewatering:** What policies should the City set regarding the discharge and loss of water (as well land settlement problems in neighboring properties) when basements are being built?

The city should require basement projects to divert the water for re-use nearby, whether on public or private property. We should explore if there is an appropriate basement construction fee to support local water or green space initiatives.

**13. Single Family Individual Review (includes SSO, Eichler preservation):** Please address:

- What type of design guidelines should be developed to preserve neighborhood character?
- Is the current process working?
- If so, give examples. If not, what should be changed?

I think the current Individual Review Guidelines are working well, although the process could be sped up.

On the SSOs that have come before the planning commission, it does not seem like there is a standardized, democratic, neighborhood process, and this worries me deeply. The city needs to create a “kit” or template which interested neighborhoods can use for this process, because this is a long-term decision.

Finally, SSOs do absolutely nothing to protect Eichler homes, which could be torn down and replaced with a different single-story home. Palo Alto should look to cities like Sunnyvale which has a number of Eichler Preservation Districts.

**14. Traffic/Commuters:** With so much traffic spreading into many neighborhoods, and with a lack of regional transportation plans, what do you propose Palo Alto should do to address employee traffic into town? How do you propose to ease the congestion on our arterial streets — especially during the rush hours — so fewer commuters will try to take unsafe short cuts through our residential neighborhood streets?

First, we have to invest in sustainable transportation systems of the 21st century. This means electrifying Caltrain, expanding our shuttle network, partnering with rideshare companies, and leveraging autonomous vehicles. We also have to provide much better information to employees who work here so they can make safer and more efficient transportation choices. This could be through the TMA, or it could be a requirement of new business licensing.

Signals on county expressways and Caltrans highways need to be better coordinated with local arterials. This will prevent backups, particularly during school hours at intersections like Oregon and Middlefield.

In College Terrace, the neighborhood championed a series of traffic calming measures such as bollards, circles, and 4-way stops. This is a great model for other neighborhoods.

**15. Parking (RPP):** Do you support an expanded Residential Parking Permit Program? Please address:

- How should it be structured to protect neighborhoods?
- Should neighborhoods get determine which type of program is appropriate for them?
- What alternatives or additional mitigations do you support?
- Will you keep in place the commitment to phase out non-resident parking in the Downtown RPP district in 10 years?

First, let's get businesses to reduce car traffic, invest in safe and easy transit, and manage parking effectively so that the RPPs can work.

I support RPPs and expansion to areas where there are well developed neighborhood plans - it's going to be different for each neighborhood. I also support programs such as the TMA that

reduce auto use by existing workers. I think there are many approaches to reducing parking needs in addition to well designed RPP programs.

**16. Caltrain/HSR:** What is your view on Caltrain's electrification plans, High Speed Rail and grade separations?

I support electrification because it will be more environmentally sustainable, will enable higher throughput, and because the funding can be leveraged for grade separation/trenching. Electrification is vital to expanding Caltrain service and providing opportunities to reduce car commuting.

Grade separations are important for quality of life, safety, and efficiency.

High Speed Rail will be a financial boondoggle here in California, but it's also the will of the state's voters, and many places around the world have efficient and enjoyable high speed networks. If HSR does come through Palo Alto, it should at the very least be grade-separated, and ideally, trenched and covered through the city. This will be good for traffic circulation, the environment, safety, and will also provide land for parks, retail, or housing.

**17. VTA:** What will be your strategy in dealing with the VTA to stop their proposed severe reduction of VTA bus service within Palo Alto, and to persuade them instead to improve their service in Palo Alto so more commuters working in Palo Alto will take VTA buses to their jobs in Palo Alto.

I support working with VTA to explore options for maintaining service. But I would also like to see Palo Alto be active in exploring other options such as shuttles/Marguerite that serve corridors where service may be reduced and how ride sharing services could fill the gap.

We must also be clear with VTA that Palo Alto pays them on an annual basis, and we deserve commensurate consideration and investment. This will require coordination with the County Board of Supervisors, the congestion management agency, and nearby north-County cities.

Finally, if we can implement successful TDM measures for new and existing developments, that will drive demand for VTA, which gives Palo Alto a stronger bargaining position.

**18. Budget:** How do you plan to fund the city's long-term pension and health benefits liability, which currently stands at \$500 million? How serious is the impact of this liability to the City's ability to provide services and amenities to residents?

If we continue to have a growing economy and tax base, with a strong top line, we can avoid this issue as a crisis. However, in the medium-term, the city should continue paying CalPERS the required amount, and we should be saving money for a larger payoff over time.

**19. Stanford:** What is the most important aspect of the City's upcoming negotiation with Stanford regarding its General Use Permit?

The most important aspect of these negotiations is the continuation and improvement of Stanford's TDM plan.

I see opportunities in dialogue with Stanford. I will push for more housing on Stanford land (shopping center and research park) and aggressive TDM programs. I value what Stanford brings to our community and want to work with them to find areas that benefit them and the residents of Palo Alto.

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

How will you make Palo Alto a more inclusive and diverse city?

First, we need to invest in transportation solutions that enable all residents and workers to efficiently go where they need to be.

Second, we need to encourage housing choices and affordable housing in the right places so that seniors, young families, renters, and low-income citizens can live here.

Third, we need to reinvigorate the city's spirit, so that our civic culture is as dynamic, efficient, and creative as our entrepreneurial culture.