

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?

Stewart Carl:

Palo should not grow at a faster than its infrastructure of schools, roads, retail, parks, etc. can support.

Leonard Ely III:

Solving the housing job/office imbalance will take time but the one thing that I am sure of is that we need to get started now.

Adrian Fine:

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.

John Fredrich:

We need to work on the housing issue and not create more commercial footage until we make some progress on housing. We need another elementary school and some PAUSD facilities at Cubberley.

Arthur Keller:

State law does allow Palo Alto to consider school impacts of our policies, though not individual development projects. The City must start to consider school overcrowding. Our high schools were originally designed for 1200 students each and are now planned to hold nearly double that.

Our Middle Schools are already at capacity. The School District can build two-story school buildings, but we cannot have two-story playing fields.

Most of the housing built in Palo Alto since 2000 has been large townhouses, resulting in the enrollment surge in our schools. Let's take a look at what type of housing we most need. Only 20% of our housing stock is studio or 1-bedroom apartments. Yet 60% of Palo Alto's households have 1 or 2 people. So it's clear we most need smaller units for these smaller households. And those tend to have less impact on our schools.

When we make decisions, our priority is to ensure that the quality of life in Palo Alto is preserved and enhanced for all Palo Altans.

We should grow family oriented housing at a rate the schools can absorb without causing overcrowding and increased class sizes.

Parkland growth should keep up with housing growth. Palo Alto must maintain the ratio of population to neighborhood parks. I support setting maximum dedication of parkland under the Quimby Act, and parkland impact fees at market rates used to acquire new parkland with new housing growth.

While Accessory Dwelling Units will become more prevalent (and a new California law makes it easier to build them), we must not allow them to interfere with the quality of life of the neighbors. In particular, these must be used by long-term tenants and not for Airbnb transient use.

Liz Kniss:

Our current average is roughly 150 new dwelling units per year. We are in compliance with the guidelines of the housing element, which is state law that requires us to identify housing sites every 7 years.

Currently, there is a 20% decrease in enrollment at the kindergarten level. This could mean that it is getting harder for young families to move into Palo Alto and we should consider the long term impacts of smaller schools which would ultimately offer fewer options for our students.

Our current population is about 65,000 and there has been very little growth over the past five years.

Lydia Kou:

Pressures on housing

1. Growth in total square footage of commercial space in Palo Alto
2. Increase in employee density in existing buildings: 250-350 sq.ft./employee becomes <100 sq.ft.
3. Conversions to office space: legal and not
4. Massive increases in office space in neighboring cities, current and planned
 - a. Menlo Park: Facebook
 - b. Mountain View:
 - i. greater San Antonio Center (including old Safeway site and Target)
 - ii. East Bayshore

Generic urban planning concepts have been applied onto Palo Alto and it is not working out. These concepts should be applied to a region instead, not a city as small as Palo Alto, one with its own unique values.

In the past decade, rampant building of office space without regard for road capacity or parking has created the problems we are dealing with today. We should be learning from past endeavors and be strategic as to how to build housing now. Questions, such as school capacity, road

capacity, city services, parks space, community space, health and safety are just some questions to ask before building blindly.

Danielle Martell:

DID NOT RESPOND

Don McDougall:

Population growth and what comes with it is affecting all communities in the region. I support strong managed growth programs to focus on mitigating the congestion impacts of growth. I do not support “no growth” as a practical solution for Palo Alto. I support infrastructure and mitigation programs like the S/CAP, TMA and Caltrain expansion. School enrollment forecasts need to be carefully reviewed and agreed by all stakeholders, including home owners, renters and business.

Greer Stone:

I believe in smart growth, not reckless growth. Cities are living entities, Palo Alto will continue to grow, it is our responsibility to manage that growth in a way that maintains our quality of life and culture, and mitigating the deleterious impacts to our schools, traffic, parking, environment, parkland, etc. As a Councilmember, I will consider all these impacts, and seek the input of the people who will most be effected by new projects.

School enrollment and having small class sizes is very important to me. I am a product of our exemplary school system. I attended Duveneck, Jordan, and graduated from Paly. My mother is an elementary school teacher, first at Duveneck and now at Ohlone. I myself taught in the school district as a substitute teacher before attending law school. Currently, our elementary enrollment numbers are down, but our middle and high schools’ are up. We have seen similar trends in Palo Alto before, such as in the mid-90s. We must plan accordingly for the future to ensure our pace of growth can keep pace with our schools.

Another critical impact new development has is traffic. I support aggressive, and enforceable, traffic mitigation strategies. My proposal would condition new development on the developer’s ability to create a traffic plan that will reduce the impact of anticipated traffic by 30 percent. The developer would then have to come back to council within a year after the project is completed to prove their plan has worked. Any amount of traffic impact over 30 percent would be assessed a penalty. The fees collected by the city for noncompliance could be invested in citywide traffic decongestion projects.

Greg Tanaka:

With the demand for housing in Palo Alto and nearby communities is increasing rapidly there are no simple solutions.

This is a regional issue that affects Palo Alto quality of life, and each community blames the other cities for this problem. To me quality of life includes good neighborhood relationships, community services like parks and recreation programs, traffic and parking complications, etc. We have to solve our traffic and parking problems through regional cooperation. For instance, Palo Alto may be losing some of its VTA bus routes because VTA is dominated by San Jose. The City should team up with neighboring cities to form a mid-peninsula authority to make certain that Palo Alto’s voice is heard. In addition, we should work with other cities to set up park-and-ride services that could dramatically decrease the amount of parking and traffic in Palo Alto.