

## Stewart Carl 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?

Palo Alto is at a crossroads. Over development is threatening our quality of life and our unique Palo Alto culture that has contributed so much to Silicon Valley's culture of innovation. Our most celebrated innovator, Steve Jobs, was the product of a "free-range" childhood in suburban Cupertino, not a cloistered upbringing in a "vibrant" urban environment. My top three goals are:

1. **Moratorium on office development** - So many of our problem are due to more than a decade of over-development of office space. With a typical "office" worker now occupying as little as 75 square-feet of space, every 75 square-feet of "office" allowed by council creates a need for 750 square-feet of living space, a tremendous opportunity for residential developers, and a tremendous burden on our infrastructure of schools, roads, retail, parks, trees, water, our air, our unique quality of life, our seniors, and our residents of moderate means. Palo Alto needs an immediate moratorium on ALL new office construction. The moratorium need to stay in place until the City can determine how much growth our infrastructure can really support.

2. **Transportation** - For better or worse, the automobile will continue to be Palo Alto's predominant mode of transportation for the foreseeable future. In the next decade passenger-rail, buses, and taxi services will increasingly come under competitive pressure from highly networked ride-sharing services and smart self-driving automobiles that are better positioned to leverage advances in networking technology to provide single mode point-to-point service to customers who have traditionally not been well served by automobiles (too old, too young, or disabled). Palo Alto must be prepared for these changes. New construction must provide more than adequate parking

3. **Architectural Compatibility** - Palo Alto is becoming a hodgepodge of incompatible architectural styles with office-park and strip-mall style architecture increasingly intruding into and looming over residential homes, parks, small retailers, and the pedestrian street scape. The Palo Alto City Council cannot design buildings. Only architects can design buildings, and only great architects can design great buildings. We must improve the independence and professionalism of architects practicing in Palo Alto, and that must begin with improving the independence and professionalism of the Architectural Review Board.

**Fund Neighborhood Associations** - I would like to stimulate engagement and strengthen our neighborhood associations by funding them with an annual allowance of \$2,500 from the city. If the funding proves cost effective the annual allowance could be increased as warranted.

## 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 studied product design and earned a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University. As an undergraduate student I studied transportation design at Art Center College of Design and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Design. I have been an active supporter of the citizen effort to achieve neighborhood compatibility for the College Terrace Centre project and Stanford Land Management's enormous Mayfield Project. I have worked tirelessly to educate myself, Palo Alto, and the wider community about the FAA's nextgen air-routes and aircraft noise, and I am the co-founder, an organizer, and an early leader of the aircraft noise group known as Sky Posse. I am a 30+ year Palo Alto resident, and after renting in Palo Alto for over a decade, became a College Terrace homeowner and have been a resident of College Terrace for the past 20+ years.

## 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?

The whole purpose of development is to increase the price of real-estate. Developers develop property to make a profit. In an environment of elastic demand, all real-estate development results in higher real-estate prices. In the current real-estate bubble it is probably impossible to develop truly affordable housing without subsidies from development fees or other sources. One of the best things we can do to make sure Palo Alto has affordable housing is protect our current stock of affordable units from development that would make them more expensive.

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

The High-density housing units that have proposed so far seem to make the units more affordable by shifting the cost of the unit onto our already overburdened infrastructure of schools, roads, retail, parks, trees, water, our air, our unique quality of life, our seniors, and our residents of moderate means. Affordability of the high-density unit goes down (a little), but the overall affordability of living in Palo Alto goes up.

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 needs an immediate moratorium on all new office development. The moratorium should stay in place until we have a realistic, and quantifiable understanding of how much growth our infrastructure can support.

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?

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

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?

Impact studies must be realistic, and must take into consideration cumulative impacts. Special attention must be paid to fragile systems like roads where even a small increase in load can precipitate a huge impact like gridlock. Design of parking schemes should be robust and designed to accommodate the maximum load that it could be expected to receive, not just the average (or less).

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

I do not support bill 707, or the concept of by-right exemptions.

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?

I miss our unique retail stores like University Art and Accent Arts (which is leaving). Preserving retail is a really difficult problem with soaring real-estate prices and rents. We can, and probably should try banning chain stores, but that will not insure a small unique retail store can survive. We can encourage new developments to have first floor retail, but again that does not insure a small unique retailer can survive while paying exorbitant rents. Maybe we need to require new developments to have BMR retail, but we need to avoid trading that against other aspects of our quality of life.

- 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?

I do not currently support the creation of additional “Granny Units”. In the current environment of lax enforcement it would be impossible to prevent “granny Units” from becoming rentals.

- 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?

Limit growth and require any new development to provide more than 4 acres of park space per 1000 residents to make up for Palo Alto’s declining park space to resident ratio.

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

Dewatering should not be allowed until the current drought ends. The water from dewatering should be captured and used to irrigate our city landscape.

- 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 support SSOs, which seem to be working, and preservation of Palo Alto’s Eichler neighborhoods, historic neighborhoods, and other neighborhoods with with unique personalities.

- 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 to 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?

Palo Alto can have a small but useful impact on traffic by encouraging walking, bicycle use, shuttle buses, and transportation demand programs but a real solution requires Palo Alto to reduce the number of employees commuting to Palo Alto by sharing jobs with neighboring cities with lower housing costs. Many of the types of employees commuting to Palo Alto could telecommute. Telecommuting should be a major part of any employer’s transportation demand management program.

**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?

I support well-functioning RPPs like we have in place in College Terrace. Getting RPP to work to the satisfaction of residents in complex environments like the University Avenue area can be more difficult, and will require ongoing work and adjustments by the City staff, the City Council, and should be informed by comments and feedback from effected residents who have intimate knowledge concerning how RPP is working in their neighborhood.

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

The increase in train traffic and infrastructure construction due to electrified Caltrain will put pressure on the quality of life in residential areas surrounding the tracks. Sound walls could psychologically and physically divide our community, and hamper automotive transportation. We need to find a way to put HSR underground. If we do not, the areas surrounding the tracks will become blighted. The noise vibration, and harshness generated by a vehicle of that size going 70-100+ mph will be difficult for most people to tolerate.

**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.

It has been very difficult to increase bus ridership. Many residents complain that the bus does not go where they want to go, or it takes too long. Buses will come under increasing competitive pressure from networked ride-sharing services, and eventually self-driving cars and taxis which will be able to serve populations traditionally not well served by Automobiles (too young, too old, and the disabled). Smaller, networked self-driving buses may offer opportunities to improve bus service. Palo Alto must begin planning to integrate these new technologies into our transportation network.

**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 long term liabilities continue to increase they could threaten the city's ability to provide services and amenities. The city council need to hold the line on employee salaries, especially managerial staff.

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

Stanford's General Use Permit is granted by the County. College Terrace's RPP is funded in part as a condition of the County issuing Stanford's permit. Palo Alto must stay aware and engaged in Stanford's General Use Permit negotiations with the County to make sure Palo Alto's interests are protected.