

Greg Tanaka 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?
- Reduce the impact of jobs and commuters by making public transit more effective – electrify and trench Caltrain, and increase shuttles, implement Transit Management Associations in downtown, California Avenue and Stanford Research Park, work with PAUSD on alternative options for students like shuttles and carpooling.
 - Protect and enhance our parklands and also strengthen the sustainability of our community with the Climate Action Plan initiatives.
 - Make City Hall work for everyone: maintain the quality of life in our neighborhoods by engaging with the community to plan for the future.

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.

Current member of Planning and Transportation Commission, serving as Chair in 2015. I have an independent voting record of opposition on the Maybell project because of bad outreach to the community, opposition to the Gateway Project which lacked solid parking and transit options for the neighborhood and championed the now successful California Avenue improvements and streetscape.

As a member of the Infrastructure Blue Ribbon Commission, I have gained deep insights into the severe infrastructure challenges the city faces like a new Public Safety Building, Municipal Services Center, and the immense financial challenges involved

President of College Terrace Residents' Association (three times re-elected). Leading with my neighbors and leaders like Doria Summa and Fred Balin, I drove the implementation of the successful residential permit parking program after years of stalled efforts.

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?

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- How do we get such housing built? I am concerned about keeping Palo Alto's heritage as a good place to raise a family, and it starts with finding innovative incentives to create new types of family friendly opportunities—as single family residences are too expensive today for young families. I like the idea of zoning for housing over retail and near transit areas.
- Can we even build enough housing to satisfy demand? No, there will always be a tension between housing and jobs in Palo Alto, but we can create better opportunities to preserve the historic residential diversity so that teachers, city workers and more can find this community easier to live in.
- Should the City increase development fees to fund more affordable housing? It might be more successful to require more units mixed throughout the city on new development over retail and other commercial.

However, there should be negligible negative impacts on the city budget, residential areas and schools, and the community must be bought into projects. These impacts must be balanced with the benefits that the projects bring.

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

Palo Alto should hold a housing summit to explore the success or failure from other communities with micro units and community housing complexes (like Palo Alto Commons, for all ages), including who they attract, impact to services, and contribution to civic engagement. Palo Alto has lost its historic place for teachers to live and work, they would be my first priority, then other service workers like first responders. I will oppose converting single family zones to high density zones.

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?

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- How much, where *and what kind of* office space can Palo Alto sustain? Palo Alto is a renowned hub for incubating new economic sectors in startup space like bedrooms, garages, coffee shops, plug & play suites. I support maintaining this heritage by limiting class A office space, securing research and development zones and maintaining the 35' and 50' height limits on commercial redevelopment in the downtown districts of University Avenue, California Avenue, East Meadow/San Antonio/Industrial Way corridors and the Stanford Research Park.

- Do you support extending the annual office space development cap? Yes, until the Comprehensive Plan is updated, which must address this issue for the long-term.
- Should the City consider placing a moratorium on new office development? Yes, pending the Comprehensive Plan update

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?

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.

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?

1. I object to the traffic methodology of Santa Clara County, and would champion its change to the more "real time" model of San Mateo Council where mitigating impact has better measurement tools.
2. Commercial projects do have some cumulative impact mitigations, but they are incorporated in the outdated 1998-2000 Comprehensive Plan—THIS MUST BE UPDATED to secure new measurements and identify mitigations.
3. I support area focus plan as are used in Menlo Park and Mountain View. This means that after the Comp Plan is updated, we focus on areas like California Avenue, downtown, West Palo Alto (Barron Park) with specific plans that identify and secure local services like grocery stores, identify traffic impacts and mitigations strategies making these plans more certain for the local neighborhood and broader community.

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

This is one of the CEQA "corrections" bills that has been one of Gov. Brown's priorities in Sacramento. I believe these bills preempt local control. Many of these issues can be addressed by Palo Alto moving more quickly to update the Comprehensive Plan, and then dive right into focus plans—which will have their own environmental impact report with mitigations specific to the identified preferred plan.

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 support independent retail in Palo Alto, and hope that we can re-instate the concept plan that this current council rejected for the Fry's area, and expand it to California Avenue so that we can create formula retail. This would limit retail giants and chains, and secure the historic retail combination of mom & pops, high quality grocery, and other services like dry cleaning and personal services.

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?

Yes, I want to look at this type of zoning for Palo Alto. I also would like to consider how to limit Airbnb similar to other communities so that neighborhoods retain their residential experience and quality of life.

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?

Complete the parks master plan which is key to identifying park use, facility updates and needs. I would like to see a park impact fee on new development so that Palo Alto can build funds to expand parks, especial the undersized parks with new land acquisition capacity.

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?

I would like to see the use of recaptured ground water during basements installations be expanded. I would support a staff examination of this issue with recommendations based on experiences from other communities and ideas from our own community members.

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?

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- What type of design guidelines should be developed to preserve neighborhood character?

Some neighborhoods are clearly defined, and others are part of larger neighborhoods. I would like to have staff work with neighborhood organizations to find the right balance that can identify how to modify the city-wide general ordinances that need to form the baseline of general code, with organized neighborhood initiatives to identify boundaries and design guidelines—many already called out in local CC&Rs but outdated by state law.

- Is the current process working?

Yes, in that a number of homogenous neighborhoods have used the city's process to self-restrict development. And no, in that it needs to be better outlined, better defined and with more up-front assistance in the process from the city.

- If so, give examples. If not, what should be changed?

A final vote by the neighbors affected should have a pre-defined affirmation percentage, a clear ballot message of change, and additional staff should be hired to help accommodate these initiatives.

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?

Do you have any idea how many employees now take public transportation compared to 5 years ago? Use this as an opportunity to show how much has been done then add what other things you propose like electrification of Caltrain that will carry more commuters, and the city will increase shuttles too.

Palo Alto has created a quality of life that give residents close proximity to professional jobs—its historic. From driveway to driveway, just like Los Angeles. These means that we have compounded historic underdevelopment of public transit opportunities, unlike other areas of the bay area that are designed around transit like Marin County which was built as a true suburb to San Francisco. This means that we need to be aggressive, and reverse the Los Angeles “I love my car” commuting norm.

Palo Alto should be a leader in reducing solo occupancy vehicles with aggressive transit management options and expand our shuttle so that they work for students and commuters, electrify Caltrain which will increase service which carries about 50% more commuters than 5 years ago when ridership was around 40,000 per day, and champion ride-share opportunities.

We also need to ensure that we hire capable staff that can address neighborhood cut-through traffic, restrict neighborhood commuter parking around shuttle stops, and reduce traffic by working with our regional partners of other Peninsula cities.

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?

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- How should it be structured to protect neighborhoods? The current ordinance and our understanding of it is still evolving, and now activated into two new neighborhoods. We must see how the process works, as well as understanding any unintended consequences, before changing the process.

- Should neighborhoods get determine which type of program is appropriate for them? In the current ordinance the neighborhoods are part of the program design, so yes they need to be included in the street changes.
- What alternatives or additional mitigations do you support? A better way to annex into a new program roll out due to identified unexpected impacts.
- Will you keep in place the commitment to phase out non-resident parking in the Downtown RPP district in 10 years? I support that objective.

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

I support electrification of Caltrain, and the blended service on the Caltrain tracks with HSR. I support trenching the train beginning at University Avenue stations so that not just Meadow and Charleston crossing will be secure, but also redesign the failed grade separations at Embarcadero and Oregon Expressway. This will secure the Palo Alto rail experience for the next century, bring safe routes to school for Paly students and eliminate the flooding at the Oregon underpass.

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 want to see VTA merge service with SamTrans along the El Camino Real routes so that service to, and through Palo Alto will be smart and vital for commuters. Currently they have to change bus lines at Palo Alto station if they want to reach San Mateo County stops—this subjects commuters to inconveniences and hardens their consideration of using a bus over driving a car.

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?

I believe Calpers, as currently defined and supported, is unsustainable. Funding Palo Alto long-term pension liability must be handled more aggressively than required under Calpers guidelines. Palo Alto can always rely on its budget and tax base to accommodate pensioners, but Calpers cannot rely on other member cities to be as responsible as Palo Alto. I will support funding pensions at responsible minimal requirements so that resources can be used for public services and infrastructure.

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

Traffic, parking and housing impacts. Also, securing open space like the Dish areas for general public use and recreation.