

Kou

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embrating cultural diversity, including celebrations of Lunar New Year and the Holi Festival.

Over the years, she's earned plenty of kudos from City Hall for her organizing activities, including an Achievement Award in 2012. Yet with election season in full force, the love is mostly unrequited. In her Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) questionnaire, she had scathing words for city leadership, calling City Hall "negligent" in updating policies for changing circumstances. She accused city leadership of "showing favoritism, especially to developers."

She claimed that City Hall "cherry-picks the sections of the Comprehensive Plan and other policies that support the developer and ignore those to the contrary." The city, she said, has been "cavalier with our money" (she points to the \$4.5 million City Hall renovation) and is incapable of managing construction projects (she cites Mitchell Park Library). The list of grievances goes on.

For Kou, much like for the other candidates in the residentialist camp, management of the city's growth is a top priority, though she acknowledges that she has yet to fully detail her strategies for addressing the changes that the city is facing. She has major reservations about planned-community zoning, which she said developers are taking advantage of in winning approval for oversized office projects. She said she is concerned that California Avenue may soon experience the same sorts of growth problems as University Avenue.

"Each development plan that comes in has to be reviewed carefully, conscientiously and skip-

tically," Kou told the Weekly. "Downtown and University Avenue is the lesson that the city should learn of what not to do in coming here to California Avenue."

Yet solutions at times remain hazy. When asked by the Weekly about actions the council could take to address the fact that many commercially zoned properties on California Avenue aren't built out to their full potential (and thus are likely to be built to greater density in the coming years), she said she still has to study the issue and talk to her colleagues.

Similarly, she said she would like to ensure the "right kind of retail" on California Avenue, including community-serving businesses such as local hardware stores, markets, music shops and other places where neighbors bump into each other and chat. But exactly how will she encourage these kinds of businesses? That is a conversation she said she'll have to have with council members and property owners.

In her campaign, like in her activities, Kou emphasizes community building and neighborhood engagement. In the PAN questionnaire, she said she is depressed by "how much is spent on vanity and hubris." Phrases like "world-class," "first in the nation," "landmark" and "innovative" get used so much that they become irrelevant to many, she said.

"Too many pay attention to only the hype and not the reality of Silicon Valley and innovation: Most first-movers fail, and early adopters incur huge costs (buggy, inefficient, badly supported) and are stuck with technology that is vastly inferior to what came shortly thereafter," Kou wrote. "Taxpayers shouldn't be funding short-term bragging rights for the politically well-connected." ■

sites around the city and considering their suitability for housing. Some moderate housing, particularly within walking distance of services, makes sense, he said. To that effect, he favors adding about a third of the new housing downtown; another third near California Avenue; and the remaining third elsewhere in the city.

His opposition to last year's Measure D notwithstanding, DuBois recognizes the need for more affordable housing. He said he opposes a ban on people living in their cars.

"If they are breaking any laws or causing disturbances, we should alert the police," he told the Weekly. "It's not a situation where I feel we should crack down."

He also supports retaining the city's planned-community zoning, which offers developers zoning exemptions in exchange for public benefits. These benefits, he said, should be intrinsic to projects, such as senior and affordable-housing developments.

"We need to define the kinds of benefits we want. For me, affordable housing and senior housing are good categories." ■

Where the residentialists stand on the issues

	Kou	Filseth	DuBois
DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposed Measure D, the rezoning of a Maybell Avenue site to accommodate 60 apartments for low-income seniors and 12 single-family homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposed Measure D, the rezoning of a Maybell Avenue site to accommodate 60 apartments for low-income seniors and 12 single-family homes. Argues that Palo Alto should estimate the number of housing units that the city can accommodate and use this data in evaluating new developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly opposes zoning exceptions and design exceptions for new commercial developments. Supports only limited changes to the existing Comprehensive Plan and immediately changing zoning to limit the impacts of commercial developments.
TRANSPORTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports a proposed residential parking-permit program in downtown Palo Alto, modeled after the existing program in College Terrace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports a residential parking-permit program downtown. Argues that the city needs to determine an acceptable level of maximum parking on residential streets before distributing parking permits to residents and employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes downtown's new residential parking-permit program should be established on a block-by-block basis, similar to the College Terrace program.
HOUSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports having the city offer a loan to encourage preservation of affordable housing at the site of the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park. Would like the city to consider designating certain parts of the city for car camping, possibly for a small fee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes the city should look at small apartments and condominiums to accommodate seniors and newcomers. Supports a ban on car camping in residential neighborhoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes planned-community projects should be better defined and that affordable housing and senior housing should be designated as two suitable public benefits.
FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about the number of executive staff at City Hall. Questions the need for and cost of positions like chief information officer and chief sustainability officer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports increasing the hotel tax from 12 percent to 14 percent to pay for infrastructure improvements but believes the council should have asked residents to approve a bond for a new police building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes the commercial sector should be contributing more to pay for its "fair share" of city services.
GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports maintaining the number of City Council members at nine. Supports giving the public more opportunity to offer feedback on developments early in the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to see a larger proportion of city staff live in Palo Alto. Opposes a proposed reduction to the size of the City Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes the size of the City Council should remain at nine members and that the architectural-review process needs to be reformed.

DuBois

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in fits and start, with the city hitting the reset button yet again last year. Through an outreach process called Our Palo Alto, the council has solicited community feedback and hopes to get a new plan in place by the end of next year.

While DuBois said he finds the outreach interesting, he questions the notion that the city's guiding document needs a significant revamp. He said he would rather see the council immediately modify zoning regulations to address residents' anxieties about the city's built environment. This includes changing some existing definitions in the city's code for things like setbacks, daylight plane and floor-area-ratio to ensure buildings don't simply get built to the maximum of what the zoning allows.

He maintains, however, that Palo Alto should not be completely closed off to growth. As a member of a panel that worked this year on the city's Housing Element, he took part in assessing various

Filseth

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tently overestimates the value of the public benefits offered as part of these deals.

"We get outgunned by the other side on the benefits all the time," Filseth said.

His answer? Have every

planned-community project go to a referendum so that voters can decide whether the benefits offered are commensurate with the exemptions sought.

"If the benefit to the community is so great and so clear, then the voters of Palo Alto will see that and approve it," Filseth said.

In his interview with the Week-

ly, Filseth stressed that the city is now "making decisions in real time that will have an effect on Palo Alto for years and years to come," especially with the Comprehensive Plan update in full swing.

"It's really important that residents and City Hall get back in alignment. That's why I'm running." ■