

# In their own words: Where the candidates stand

In candidate forums, interviews and a questionnaire sponsored by Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN), Palo Alto Rotary Club and the Palo Alto Weekly, council candidates have opined on significant issues facing the city. Below are their answers to five key questions.

WOLBACH	FILSETH	DUBOIS	CORMACK	BOONE
<b>ON HOUSING</b>				
<p>Was one of four co-signers of colleagues memo that proposed revising the zoning code to promote more housing. Led the effort to revise the zoning ordinance on accessory dwelling units to remove parking requirements and relax other development standards. Supported growth scenarios in the Comprehensive Plan that would have raised the council's housing goals. Opposed proposals to explore rental stabilization and instituting a requirement for "just cause" evictions. Said he would be open to allowing affordable housing developments to exceed the 50-foot height limit. Supported increasing the affordable-housing impact fee from \$20 to \$35 but opposed raising it to \$60, as proposed by DuBois and Filseth. "I'd be open to another Channing House." (Rotary forum)</p>	<p>Believes the city should focus primarily on affordable housing. Says he supports the teacher-housing proposal shepherded by county Supervisor Joe Simitian and the below-market-rate housing project proposed by the nonprofit Palo Alto Housing. Strongly supports increasing the affordable-housing impact fee for new developments and said he would like to see the council revisit the issue next year. "I think the housing market works at the high end — just not for everybody else." (Weekly interview)</p>	<p>Supported the creation of an affordable-housing overlay zone and the "workforce housing" development at 2755 El Camino Real. Supported loosening rules for accessory-dwelling units but opposed eliminating all parking requirements for these units. Wants the council to explore new policies on rent-stabilization, including a cap on rent increases and a requirement for just-cause evictions. Also supports raising affordable-housing impact fees for new developments and redefining "mixed-use" in the zoning code to mean more residential and less office space. "I am concerned we've made it harder to find places for below-market-rate projects." (Weekly interview)</p>	<p>Calls affordable housing one of her highest priorities, especially for seniors. Believes the city should allow some zoning flexibility for developers for housing projects, such as allowing buildings taller than 50 feet if its below-market-rate housing near transit. Says Cubberley Community Center can be a candidate for housing. Supports the revised zoning rules for accessory-dwelling units. Does not support rent control and said she would not have supported exploration of a new "just-cause eviction" requirement without first gathering more data. "I'm particularly concerned about seniors in our community, and there's going to be more of them." (PAN forum)</p>	<p>Believes the city's focus should be "real affordable housing" composed of below-market-rate units. Says the city should work with developers and community members to create a master plan for housing. Supports raising the affordable-housing impact fee for new developments. Supports the council's recent move to require relocation assistance for evicted tenants but does not support adopting a rent-control program. Does not support Cubberley Community Center as a potential site for affordable housing. "We have to have housing actual people can afford." (PAN forum)</p>
<b>ON TRANSPORTATION</b>				
<p>Supports making plans now for a potential 2020 ballot measure to institute a business tax based on head count. The tax, in his proposal, would fund a variety of transportation programs and would not be limited to grade separation. Supports expanding the role of the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association and giving employers the option of either contributing toward the association or paying a fee or tax. On grade separation, he supports working with Caltrain and neighboring cities to consider funding sources and cost-saving measures. Supports greater engagement with state and federal legislators to discuss funding options for the Caltrain corridor. "Given the Peninsula's significance in the state and national economy, we can make a strong case that we need state and federal funding to keep our region moving." (PAN questionnaire)</p>	<p>Believes the council should, above all, control growth that would produce additional traffic. Supports raising parking-permit fees to pay for transportation programs, expanding the city's bike program and more strongly enforcing transportation-demand management programs in new developments. For grade separations, he supports looking at a business tax for 2020 to fund the needed improvements. "I'd like to find a way (so) that traffic doesn't get any worse than it is today." (PAN forum)</p>	<p>Supports passing a business tax to fund transportation initiatives, including improvements at rail crossings. Believes the city should work with Cupertino, Mountain View and other nearby cities to design a tax that is "scaled based on the size of impacts an employer causes." with exceptions for small businesses. Believes the city should consider a multi-city authority to fund and help manage the grade-separation project. When it comes to bicycle infrastructure, he believes the city should focus on vehicle flow on arterials like El Camino Real rather than include bike lanes on these streets. "Businesses need to help pay their fair share of the impacts caused by commuters." (PAN questionnaire)</p>	<p>Calls the creation of a "really robust shuttle system" — potentially funded at least in part through a business tax — one of her top priorities. Said she supports "denser housing closer to transit" in recognition of the fact that many people aren't able to bike. Says the city should have done a better job in both designing the Ross Road bike project and in making sure residents understand new projects before they are implemented. "We're definitely not spending too much money on bikes, but I think we are spending too much money without thinking about priorities." (Rotary forum)</p>	<p>Calls "traffic" his top concern and strongly supports creating a business tax to fund transportation improvements in Palo Alto. Supports focusing development near transportation hubs and taking a more collaborative approach with other cities in the county to work on grade separation of the railroad tracks. Wants the city to put together an aggressive plan for solving traffic problems, which would include buses, shuttles and carpools. "I'm tired of the traffic. I'm tired of yelling and screaming in my windshield when no one is there to hear it, and I want to make a difference." (Weekly interview)</p>
<b>ON FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>				
<p>Voted to support upgrades to the city's animal shelter and the Junior Museum and Zoo. Opposes the construction of the new downtown garage. Said he would like to see Cubberley Community Center house more senior services, including a possible new senior center. Supports pension reforms, including more realistic CalPERS rates of return, and investment in a Section 115 Trust. "I'm disappointed that more people didn't come out on council to oppose continuing with our overpriced downtown parking garage that we don't need." (Rotary forum)</p>	<p>Supports fully funding the council's 2014 infrastructure plan, including the new downtown garage. Voted to support upgrades to the city's animal shelter and the Junior Museum and Zoo. Led the council's efforts to institute pensions reforms and, as Finance Committee chairman, made a motion requiring the city manager to identify \$4 million in cuts to the current budget. Was lead author of a colleagues memo requiring more transparency in labor negotiations (including publication of every formal offer proposed or received by the city). Led the council's effort to consider "realistic investment-return rates" in accounting for pension obligations. Supports contributing to a Section 115 Trust (which is devoted to pension obligations) and developing an amortization plan for the city's existing debt. "We need to make some shifts now, to avoid a crisis in the future." (PAN forum)</p>	<p>Supports fully funding the council's 2014 infrastructure plan, including the new downtown garage. Believes funds from a new business tax could help pay for grade separations and other transportation projects. Supports having the city make larger annual payments — beyond the minimum required by CalPERS — to reflect the "true rate of return of pension investments." Supports the city's recent moves to increase transparency on pensions by clearly calling out unfunded liabilities in the city's budget and by tracking the city's obligations in real time. "I think we should fund the infrastructure plan as we promised to the voters. ... I think we made this commitment to the community multiple times." (Weekly interview)</p>	<p>Calls the reconstruction of Cubberley Community Center one of her priorities and says the project can be potentially funded through a bond. Believes the council should do a better job containing the growing infrastructure costs, possibly by re-prioritizing projects. Says she is open to revisiting the council's decision to construct a new downtown garage, pending more analysis about downtown's parking demand. Says the city should consider a "zero-based budgeting" approach, in which the city looks at and justifies every expenditure. Also supports a "participatory budget platform" that allows residents to weigh in on budget decisions. "We're enjoying all the things (city employees) made possible, but it's not fair to the people in the future if we're not saving enough money to pay them the pensions that they're owed." (Rotary forum)</p>	<p>Strongly supports the construction of a new public-safety building but believes the city can save money by not building a downtown garage, which is part of the council's 2014 infrastructure plan. Says the city should "immediately review" all expenditures and get rid of "any unnecessary projects." Supports increasing funding for social services. "Social services is one thing that needs to always stay in place." (PAN questionnaire)</p>

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## WOLBACH

## FILSETH

## DUBOIS

## CORMACK

## BOONE

### ON COMMERCIAL GROWTH

Supported removing the downtown cap on non-residential development from the Comprehensive Plan and adopting the annual office cap for downtown, California Avenue and El Camino Real. Supported a provision in the annual cap that allows unused square footage to be rolled over year to year. Supported the reduction of the city's long-term cap on non-residential development from 1.7 million square feet to 850,000 square feet by 2030. Supported the policy prohibiting conversion of ground-floor retail to other uses. "I'm not trying to escalate office growth. I'm trying to rein it in." (Weekly interview)

Believes Silicon Valley businesses should do much more to help fund the impacts of their growth, particularly when it comes to housing and transportation. Opposed removal of the downtown cap from the Comprehensive Plan and supported the 50,000-square-foot office cap but opposed the provision that allows the rollover of unused square footage. Supported the reduction of the city's long-term cap on non-residential development from 1.7 million square feet to 850,000 square feet by 2030. Supported the policy prohibiting conversion of ground-floor retail to other uses. "The Valley produces jobs five times faster than dwelling units. No community can keep up with that without massive external investments." (Weekly interview)

Opposed removal of the downtown cap on commercial development from the Comprehensive Plan. Supports the annual 50,000-square-foot office cap but opposed the provision that allows the rollover of unused square footage from one year to the next. Supported the reduction of the city's long-term cap on non-residential development by 2030 from 1.7 million square feet to 850,000 square feet. Supported the policy prohibiting conversion of ground-floor retail to other uses. "Every square foot of office space just makes our housing shortage worse." (April 20, 2018, City Council meeting)

Says she is "comfortable" with the city's existing caps on commercial development, including the recent reduction of a commercial-space cap from 1.7 million square feet to 850,000 square feet by 2030. She says she would have preferred to have the voters rule on the cap. Says she supports the annual 50,000-square-foot office limit, including the new provision that allows the rollover of unused square footage from one year to another. Says the city's caps have "served us well." "I'm really hopeful this particular topic will be less of a discussion going forward." (Weekly forum)

Believes Palo Alto needs to do a better job regulating the employee density within existing businesses, including more code enforcement. Said he would have supported the just-adopted, lower 850,000-square-foot office cap by 2030, though he would have preferred to have seen the issue go to the voters. Strongly supports a business tax to pay for transportation. "Many companies are packing in more employees than they need to have in a business. We need to make sure they're not ballooning so much." (Rotary forum)

### ON GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

Co-wrote a colleagues memo urging the creation of a Town Hall program, with regular meetings in different neighborhoods. Supports greater collaboration between the City Council and the Palo Alto Unified School Board, including a joint study session at least once per year. Believes major last-minute changes to staff recommendations are sometimes necessary because the council is responsible for "substantive policy direction, rather than function as a rubber stamp for staff reports." Says the current process, while far from perfect, generally works. "Obviously, nobody likes to stay very late, but if that's what it takes to do people's work, that's what we need to do." (Weekly forum)

Believes individual council members should "exercise more judgment and responsibility" when it comes to not proposing major policies at the last minute. The issue, he says, has more to do with who is on the council rather than the council's procedures. Supports having Town Hall-style meetings about once per quarter. Says the council should do a better job in ensuring that it appoint commissioners who would submit to high ethical standards. "If we argue a little bit and we come up to a good space, that's more important to me than, 'Was everybody really nice to each other?'" (Weekly interview)

Says he is very concerned about last-minute policy proposals made without adequate staff analysis or public input — conduct that he calls "bad governance." Sees eroding public trust in local government (as reflected in citizen surveys) as a problem and believes the council can do a better job ensuring that members of local boards and commissions act ethically. Believes the council and the school board need to work together on traffic, transportation, parking and Cubberley Community Center. "We've taken some huge votes while the majority of Palo Alto is asleep." (PAN forum)

Believes that last-minute policy changes undertaken without public input or staff analysis are a significant problem. Her proposed solution is to simply vote "no" on amendments that include significant changes. Says city staff and Palo Alto Unified School District staff should be better connected on joint issues of concern, with frequent meetings between liaisons from each agency. Supports having council members participate in monthly Town Hall-style meetings in various neighborhoods to discuss major projects such as bike boulevards, grade separations and upcoming agenda items. "Those of you who are careful observes of this council will see that trust has been eroded and that's going to need to be rebuilt for the leadership to function correctly." (PAN forum)

Citing the need for more transparency, Boone said the City Council should "never conduct city business behind closed doors." He also said he believes no measure should ever be approved without public comment and that last-minute changes to the council's agendas should not be allowed without public input. Believes council meetings currently run far too late into the night and proposed possibly having more, but shorter, meetings. "I believe no measure should ever be approved without public comment or review." (PAN questionnaire)