

2018 Palo Alto City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Silicon Valley at Home (SV@Home) is an affordable housing policy and advocacy organization working to ensure housing affordability for all who work and live in Silicon Valley. As a candidate running for office, we invite you to participate in a survey regarding affordable housing. Responses to this survey will be shared widely with community members, and SV@Home members and partner agencies.

Please complete the survey by September 17th, 2018

Email address *

Candidate name

Cory Wolbach

A. What are your housing priorities?

I articulate and work for a three-legged stool approach to addressing the housing crisis. (1) Supply and demand, (2) as many subsidized units as possible, and (3) renter protections. 1: Supply and demand: Significantly increased housing supply (balanced by slower job growth) to do our part to reduce the regional jobs-housing imbalance. Policies include coordinated area plans to create new neighborhoods; moderate density, car-light housing near transit; and streamlined approval of Accessory Dwelling Units (I led the successful effort to legalize ADUs for most homes in Palo Alto.) 2: Subsidized projects and inclusionary units for low-income people and families, public employees, seniors, homeless, and people with disabilities. 3: Renter Protections, such as relocation assistance for tenants facing eviction without just cause, substantial rental increases, or a property being converted; and strengthening our 1-year lease rules.

B. To date, Palo Alto has failed to meet any of its state mandated housing goals. Would you support higher automatic densities - like that which would allow the President Hotel Apartments - along El Camino Real as well as University and California Avenues?

The President Hotel is a wonderful building and it makes Palo Alto special. It demonstrates that a moderate density building over 50' with limited parking can be loved by our community. It shows a car-light lifestyle is possible in our city. Some parts of Palo Alto near high-capacity transit (like University, California Avenue, and parts of El Camino) could support higher density zoning. I co-authored the memo to launch our current Housing Work Plan which includes changing our density, FAR, mixed-use balance, and parking requirements to allow and encourage more housing -- especially at the lower end of the market, rather than luxury condos.

C. Do you support and will you advocate for Measure-A funded projects in your jurisdiction? If yes, how will you work with your community to ensure support and acceptance of supportive housing for the homeless and families earning less than \$30,000 a year?

Yes. Palo Alto residents support a diverse and inclusive community of all incomes, including those who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness, and those making less than \$30,000 a year. The Opportunity Center is a success story, and we should have another project like that in Palo Alto. It is time to convene advocates for the homeless, non-profits, senior City staff, and community leaders who helped create the Opportunity Center in order to start the conversation about where the next supportive housing for the homeless could be created in Palo Alto. When particular projects are proposed, we must have an appropriate dialog with the community to humanize these projects and build the appropriate trust to ensure long-term acceptance. Through collaboration, we can bring more such projects to our community.

D. The North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan would add to the Palo Alto's supply of multifamily housing, including market rate, affordable, "missing middle," and senior housing in a mixed use, transit-accessible neighborhood. How many homes do you think are appropriate as part of a redeveloped North Ventura Area? How many of these homes should be affordable to lower-income households? And how many of them should be affordable to moderate-income households?

The short answer to each part of your question: As many as possible. To be clear, the North Ventura CAP (NVCAP, aka the Fry's site) could (not would) add to Palo Alto's supply of multifamily housing. I certainly will support that, but it's not guaranteed. We haven't yet done the work to identify a number for how much housing could be feasible and accepted by the community in the NVCAP, but my goal is to add as many units as are workable, and as many affordable and missing middle units as possible. I have advocated for using Coordinated Area Plans (CAPs) as a planning tool for four years, and am excited we have initiated the process for the NVCAP. We should envision the NVCAP including a significant portion of our Comprehensive Plan's housing goal. If we do similar CAPs at the Stanford Research Park and University Station, we could achieve most of our housing goal in three areas planned with significant community input.

E. Do you support the Comp Plan goal of building 300 or more new homes per year through the year 2030?

Yes. I tried repeatedly to include more housing in our Comp Plan, but I simply didn't have the votes on the Council to make it happen. The question now is whether we will actually deliver on our Comp Plan promises, or abandon them. I am the only candidate in the race who has consistently worked for and advocated for more housing for the past four years. With appropriate zoning changes such as those being developed in our Housing Work Plan, more Accessory Dwelling Units, and coordinated area plans, we can create the necessary conditions to meet our commitment. As we continue to collect data about whether our policy changes are having the intended effects, I will continue to take a lead on identifying policy changes that will move us closer towards our goals, and thus closer to a stable, welcoming community for all ages and incomes.