

Public Comments (Digital Commenter) – Natural Environment

Topic	Public Comments
Open Space	<p>For as many years (45) as I have been here I find it reprehensible that Palo Alto does not allow the general public to use Foothill Park.</p> <p>Open Space is for all. This could be maintained by charging an entrance fee. Hikers and Bicyclist can entrance the Park but people with cars cannot. We have many visitors from all over the world that could benefit from access to Foothill by car. There could be a limit of a day to car access so the Park is not overwhelmed. An app could be developed to see if Park is full and signage along Page Mill road to let people know the same. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Open Space	<p>The comprehensive plan must specifically mention defensible space, this is a significant fire issue. Homes in the Open Space must be protected from fire, and the city must work with the owners. The city must be very careful not to impose artificial scenic values on the Open Space owners. The same laws that govern what is visible in downtown Palo Alto should apply to Open Space properties. If the City Staff has difficulty, they should walk the Open Space and come to a reasonable conclusion regarding historic and current use. Open Space residents share the same rights and responsibilities of others in the community, and cannot be treated as a disparate minority under the law.</p>
Open Space	<p>Aggressive removal of invasive plants.</p>
Creeks and Streams	<p>regarding POLICY N-10 "Work with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and other relevant regional agencies to enhance riparian corridors and provide adequate flood control by use of low impact restoration strategies", cement flood control channels, such as "Barron Creek" and others that flow through neighborhoods and that are not allowed to be vegetated or to have overhanging vegetation contribute to evapotranspiration rates and raise the ambient temperature in the vicinity of the channels by reflecting heat from the extensive cement surfaces. Suggest that channel-clearing crews employed by the water district desist from removing vegetation adjacent to the channels, and only remove debris that has collected in the channels themselves. Suggest modifying cement channels to reduce the amount of evapotranspiration and heat reflection from the surfaces. Suggest investigating modifications to cement channels to allow permeable surfaces that could absorb some rainfall rather than allow all moisture to runoff from cemented surfaces, thereby allowing some "riparian" effects or attributes within the cement channels and adjacent soils.</p>
Creeks and Streams	<p>I really dislike the concrete waterways that we call "streams" in Palo Alto. There are no plants, no frogs, no nature of any kind. There must be a better way to do flood control.</p>

Creeks and Streams	I would like to see these things: 1) continuous removal of invasive plants, 2) time removal of trash, 3) restoration of channelized creek beds.
Creeks and Streams	Removal of invasive plants and trash needs to be done continuously. I'd like to see restoration of channelized streams.
Urban Forest	<p>City zoning codes contain clauses relating to shadows cast by houses on neighbors' property. Palo Alto needs zoning rules for very tall trees that cast long, dark shadows, spread unsightly debris on neighbors' property, uproot fences, and because of their sun-blocking shadows, can prevent the installation of solar panels. Strict laws force property owners to keep redwood trees they may not want, even those planted in very inappropriate locations. Redwoods grow quickly, soon becoming giant-sized problems in out small suburban lots. Redwoods are not native to Palo Alto's Oak Savannah (now turned into residential yards). Before human intervention, in the native Oak Savannah they appeared naturally only very close to creeks. Redwood seeds from the coastal range were carried down by creek waters and kept moist by them.</p> <p>Trees are an asset if they are appropriate to the location and do not cause problems for adjacent neighbors. Many trees and shrubs of moderate height provide beauty and screening and do not block neighbors' sunshine nor dump staining debris on neighbors' property for months every year. As it is now, anyone can plant redwoods or any other tall tree anywhere they want on their property, regardless of how the trees will affect neighbors.</p> <p>There is no restriction on planting sun-blocking gigantic trees on private property. Neighbor-friendly tree planting should be required.</p>
Urban Forest	<p>Trees take several years to die; and many of the trees in our City currently appear are on their way to death. (Dead branches, smaller canopies, sparse needles or leaves, early leaf drop. etc). While the City counts the number of trees and replaces based on number of trees removed, that measure does not encompass the years it takes to reach a size that provides the services we expect from trees. Often we see that another landowner or neighbor has been granted permission to remove or severely prune a large or heritage tree. We need an additional measure that will illustrate the true loss of services. Any easy way to get at this it to measure the volume of trees that we lose each year and report on that amount each year so we know if we are losing or maintaining the services from the trees, especially the large trees. This can be easily obtained by not simply counting trees, but also recording the chest-height diameter and variety of every tree removed. Additional information can be gained by having cutters report on branches over 6" diameter reported.</p> <p>Annual reports then contain a true reflection of the service capacity of our canopy.</p>

<p>Urban Forest</p>	<p>provide ID/name labels for trees in public parks and selected neighborhood street trees (for instance, where the same species of tree is used extensively in a neighborhood), including whether it is a "native/indigenous/natural here" or "native/indigenous/natural to ___(another geographic region or continent)" to educate residents about the origins of and habitat compatibility of their local trees.</p>
<p>Urban Forest</p>	<p>A forest is not just trees, but an ecosystem. There are a lot of parkways that are grass and a few trees or trees with ivy. Parkway are opportunities to create a patch work of habitat islands for pollinators. The city should encourage neighborhoods to create habitat that not only includes trees, but other native species. An example of this is the pollinator habitat I am installing in the parkway on Embarcadero at Primrose Way. The city gave me the green light for this project but there are many other parkways that offer opportunities for habitat enhancement.</p>
<p>Urban Forest</p>	<p>It would be useful to have guidelines for the kind of trees to plant that would not destroy sidewalks and create hazards for pedestrians. Additional guidelines for fewer allergy stimulating trees would also help. Palo Alto is an allergy sufferers nightmare in spring, especially.</p>
<p>Water Resources</p>	<p>regarding POLICY N-20, "Maximize the conservation and efficient use of water in new and existing residences, businesses and industries", the current water conservation incentive for residential construction and remodel projects as it applies to low-flow toilets is administered by the Santa Clara Valley Water District: this program is not adequately advertised or explained and does not result in rebates for exchange of high-flow, old toilets unless the property owner/developer is aware they must contact the District prior to dismantling and removing the old toilets, make an appointment to have the old toilet "inspected", and then request the rebate. PG&E, for example, simply accepts purchase receipts for new, low-flow toilets that will be or have been installed, and issues rebates without requiring inspection. If the SCVWD does not distribute all it's rebate funding--where does the money go?</p>
<p>Air Quality</p>	<p>ENFORCE the leaf blower ban. PaloAlto311 should have a dedicated link for reporting gas powered leaf blowers by address, license of truck, and/or photo of violation. In addition, the police should have a database of violators, and start following up on repeat offenders. There is no reason for gasoline powered blowers in residential neighborhoods. In addition, they have been against the law for many years now. Electric blowers are bad enough, they kick up a cloud of dust, debris, spores, pollen, etc. and have an annoying sound. We have asked our gardener to use the electric blower only for large flat areas: the driveway and the brick patio. We may ask him to use a rake or broom in the future.</p> <p>Perhaps it is time to levy a fine against the home owner whose yard is blown by a</p>

	gasoline powered blower. With an increase for each subsequent violation. This should quickly put an end to gasoline powered blowers, or else provide the city with another revenue stream.
Air Quality	<p>Ban all leaf blowers. The gas blowers emit GHG, and in these times of drought and water conservation when the ground is very dry, they kick up a LOT of particulate matter that we all breathe in.</p> <p>Ban all outdoor wood burning. The particulate matter in wood smoke is particularly damaging to lungs, exacerbates asthma, and many people are sensitive or allergic to the smoke.</p>
Air Quality	regarding POLICY N-27 and POLICY N-29, include leaf blowers--both electric and gas-powered--in the list of sources of particulate emitters.
Air Quality	The city should work even harder to increase use of mass transit, especially Caltrain. The trains during rush hours are already full. Can we have longer and/or more frequent trains? I know electric trains are planned -- but far into the future. I am sure there are things we can do now. The large Facebook campus is right next to a railroad line; let's start using it to connect Fremont to Redwood City. This could be done very quickly (at least the San Mateo County side as I am sure the bridge will take some work).
Air Quality	<p>When considering traffic patterns one cannot help notice the traffic pattern above our heads.</p> <p>Flight pattern to local airport has dramatically changed over the last few years. These frequent low flying airplanes affect air quality and increase noise.</p> <p>The city should act aggressively and with all available measure to shift back flight pattern to its original, pre 1995 pattern.</p>
Noise	Raise PROGRAM N-56 and N-61 to a higher importance. Airplanes going over and gardeners using noisy power equipment are the primary offenders. N-59 is also a good idea, but should also apply to outside contractors who collect waste.
Noise	How about hiring a waste company that uses quiet (electric?) trucks? When I think of noise, I think of being woken in the early morning by those seemingly unmuffled garbage trucks. Yes, I know it would cost more. Worthwhile things do.
Noise	<p>None of the local sources of noise are so significant that they need to be addressed. Even though we live close to the rail corridor, the noise level is acceptable.</p> <p>As a community we should more concerned about going too far, i.e., that efforts to reduce ambient noise may further constrain local culture---everything from outdoor music to general aviation to restaurant hours---and may therefore</p>

	<p>reduce overall quality of life more than enhance it.</p> <p>That said, cars are a significant noise source. If transportation policies focused on supporting transit while reducing car usage and parking have the effect of reducing ambient noise, that's a nice side effect.</p>
Energy	<p>Program N-65 and POLICY N-47 are my favorites. All new construction should be provided with the maximum number of solar panels that can economically generate electricity. The minimum goal should be electricity neutral on an annual average. All remodels of private and commercial (including city) buildings should be evaluated for adding solar or wind energy generation. All new city vehicles should be electric unless an overriding reason exists for another energy source.</p>
Energy	<p>Reduce the electrical load wherever possible. Replace light switches with dimming switches. Incandescent light bulbs last much much longer on dimming circuits as the light bulbs are seldom at full power. Living rooms, family rooms, TV rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms are all good candidates for dimming circuits.</p> <p>Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs. Make sure the LED package says "dimmable" if it's on a dimming circuit. There are even LED replacements for 4 foot fluorescent tubes.</p> <p>Replace the fluorescent lights in city hall and parking garages with LED tubes.</p> <p>Promote conversion of wood burning fireplaces to natural gas burning fireplace inserts. They can be very efficient and be controlled by the regular house thermostat. The fireplace insert can be used to heat most homes on all but the coldest days in December.</p> <p>Now most important, don't require any conversion of natural gas appliances to electrical equivalents, including heat pumps on both new and existing buildings. Conversion to electrical appliances from gas water heaters and gas furnaces will only increase the electrical load and double the users monthly heating bill. See http://www.paloaltoenergy.org for more details.</p>
Energy	<p>Please implement the provisions of Measure E that was overwhelmingly supported by the citizens of Palo Alto.</p>
Energy	<p>I think the city need implement policy, not suggestions, that new construction of all types of buildings has to include solar panels and solar water heaters.</p>
Climate Change and Adaptation	<p>Along with your climate action plan, consider establishing wildlife corridors in the city. As the bay inundates large portions of the bay-lands, it will push all of the wildlife that is presently around the edge of the bay into the cities. This wildlife will need places to live, corridors to move from one place to another, hunting grounds, territories, etc. What will Palo Alto do to accommodate them? How will</p>

	<p>Palo Alto educate the people whose backyards have become a part of the wildlife habitat? We are going to have to learn to live side-by-side and do so peacefully. How will Palo Alto address these issues with the people who will be affected before they find that their property contains foxes, raccoons, opossums, etc?</p>
<p>Climate Change and Adaptation</p>	<p>Start taxing SUV's more and Vans. They do this in London and it works.</p> <p>Take the large busses off road, too wide and no one wants to ride them and inefficient and a waste of money. Start fining bicyclist who do not ride in their lane and taxing them for bike licenses.</p> <p>Enact no smoking in apartments and condo's. Palo Alto also says it is Green. The city of SF does not allow smoking within 35 feet of doors and no smoking in apts or condo's. Palo is backwards!!!!!!</p>