

This preliminary draft chapter was prepared by City staff in April 2017. The chapter will be presented as a draft to the CAC for review at the April 18, 2017 meeting. The revised chapter will be presented as a draft to the CAC as a consent item on May 16, 2017. Following CAC recommendation, it will be presented as a draft to Palo Alto City Council in the summer of 2017, along with final CAC comments.

GOVERNANCE

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VISION: Palo Alto will maintain a positive civic image and be a leader in the regional, state, and national policy discussions affecting the community. The City will work with neighboring communities to address common concerns and pursue common interests. The public will be actively and effectively involved in City affairs, both at the Citywide and neighborhood levels. Where appropriate, the City Council will delegate decision-making responsibilities to local boards and commissions. The Council will also assign advisory roles to these bodies as well as other community groups. Residents, businesses, and elected and appointed officials will work collaboratively to address the issues facing the City in a timely manner. This inclusive, participatory process will help build a sense of community.

INTRODUCTION

The Governance chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is a non-mandatory section that addresses community involvement and participation in the city planning process. The chapter provides guidance to citizens and neighborhood groups seeking to participate in this process. It also provides guidance to those carrying out the policies and programs in this Plan. The chapter is intended as a vehicle for implementation rather than a Plan “element” in the traditional and legal sense. Consequently, it is not subject to the State requirements for consistency and comprehensiveness that apply to the earlier sections of the Plan.

The Governance chapter begins by describing the framework within which local planning decisions are made. It profiles the City’s governing bodies and major departments as well as the funding sources for municipal activities. This sets the stage for the goals, policies, and programs that follow.

FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Palo Alto was incorporated as a Chartered City in 1909. The City has adopted a strong City Council/City Manager form of government. In 2014, residents voted to reduce the size of the City Council from nine members to seven, a change effective in 2018. Each City Council member serves a four-year term, with a mayor and vice-mayor who are elected to one-year terms by their fellow Council members. The City



Council has two standing committees: the Finance Committee and the Policy and Services Committee. In addition to their legislative duties, Council members represent the City on a variety of local, county, regional, and statewide boards, commissions and other organizations. These include the Santa Clara County Cities Association, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), among others.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The City Council has created a number of boards and commissions to advise the Council on policy issues. With the support of a series of temporary citizen committees that advise on specific projects and issues, these standing groups serve a variety of specific functions such as development review, protection of historic resources, and youth relations. The purpose and membership specifics of each board and commission are summarized in Table G-1 below.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Palo Alto citizens are highly engaged in the work of the City, and Palo Alto intends to uphold its reputation as one of the country's most livable cities. The City Council is committed to widening the circle of residents who provide subject matter expertise and participate when a broader base of input is required.

There are numerous opportunities for public participation in the decisions and policies of local government. These range from in-person meetings and community workshops, to online technologies to mobile applications. Citizens can serve on boards and commissions, as well as issue-specific committees that address programs and activities across the City. Every City Council meeting also offers the opportunity for citizens to speak about an agenda item or topic, or to watch the proceedings on their local cable channel. The City engages in two-way conversations with citizens

TABLE G-1 CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Board or Commission	No. of Members	Term Length (Years)	Requirements for Membership	Purpose	Supporting Department or Division
Architectural Review Board (ARB)	5	3	City Council appointment; at least three architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals.	Design review of all new construction of, and changes and additions to, commercial, industrial and multiple-family projects.	Planning Division
Historic Resources Board (HRB)	7	3	City Council appointment; at least three architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals; one owner/ occupant of a category one or two historic structure or structure in an historic district; and one possessor of an academic education or practical experience in history or related field.	To review and make recommendations to the ARB and City Council on exterior changes to, and reclassifications of, buildings on the Historic Building Inventory.	Planning Division
Human Relations Commission (HRC)	7	3	City Council appointment of Palo Alto residents who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City.	To act with respect when any person or group does not benefit fully from public or private opportunities or resources in the community, or is treated unfairly with respect to factors of concern to the Commission, including housing, employment, education and government services.	Office of Human Services
Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC)	7	4	City Council appointment of Palo Alto residents who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City.	Make recommendations to the City Council on the Comprehensive Plan regarding development and transportation; zoning changes; subdivisions and appeals; and other policies affecting land use in Palo Alto.	Planning Division
Public Art Commission (PAC)	7	3	City Council appointment of individuals who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City, and who are either members of the ARB, experienced visual artists, and/or visual art educators, scholars or collectors.	Acquire and site permanent works of art, specifically outdoor sculpture; and advise the City in matters pertaining to the quality, quantity, scope & style of art in public places.	Arts and Cultural Division
Utilities Advisory Commission (UAC)	7	3	Utility customers or authorized representatives of a utility customer, six of whom are Palo Residents.	Provide advice on the development of electric, gas and water resources; joint action projects which involve such resources; and environmental implications of utilities projects, conservation and demand management.	Utilities Department

TABLE G-1 CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS					
Board or Commission	No. of Members	Term Length (Years)	Requirements for Membership	Purpose	Supporting Department or Division
Library Advisory Commission	5	3	City Council-appointment of Palo Alto residents who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City.	Advise the City Council on matters relating to the Palo Alto City Library, including planning and policy, state legislative proposals, budgeting, and community input.	
Parks and Recreation Commission	7	3	City Council-appointment of individuals who have demonstrated interest in parks and open space matters, and who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City..	Advise the City Council on matters pertaining to the activities of the Open Space, Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation Division of the Community Services Department, including master planning and policy, state legislative proposals and community input.	

across a variety of technologies including social media and dedicated online portals for direct citizen input. There are also a number of City mobile applications that citizens can download and use to report issues or problems they would like the City to address. Palo Alto maintains a transparent development review process that targets predictable outcomes, is user-friendly, and invites public involvement.

Palo Alto will continue to seek out new technologies and engagement opportunities that will allow interested residents to more effectively engage in the civic life of the City.

CIVIC AND NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

Palo Alto encourages the formation of programs to support neighborhood connectedness and civic organizations. Many individuals find it easier and more compelling to engage in neighborhood improvement, rather than citywide activities. The City has developed a number of community-building initiatives that foster strong neighborhoods and build connections block by block.

Neighborhood organizations are the foundation of such localized civic involvement, and provide residents with opportunities to learn about citywide issues on a localized scale. They also provide a useful means of relaying local priorities and concerns back to the City Council and others involved in City government.

VOLUNTEERISM

One of Palo Alto's greatest assets is its highly motivated and talented citizenry. Residents offer their time and skills to the City in a variety of capacities, ranging from service on boards and commissions to construction of public improvements to delivery of services like recreation and elder care. The City is committed to continued and expanded use of volunteers.

CITY DEPARTMENTS

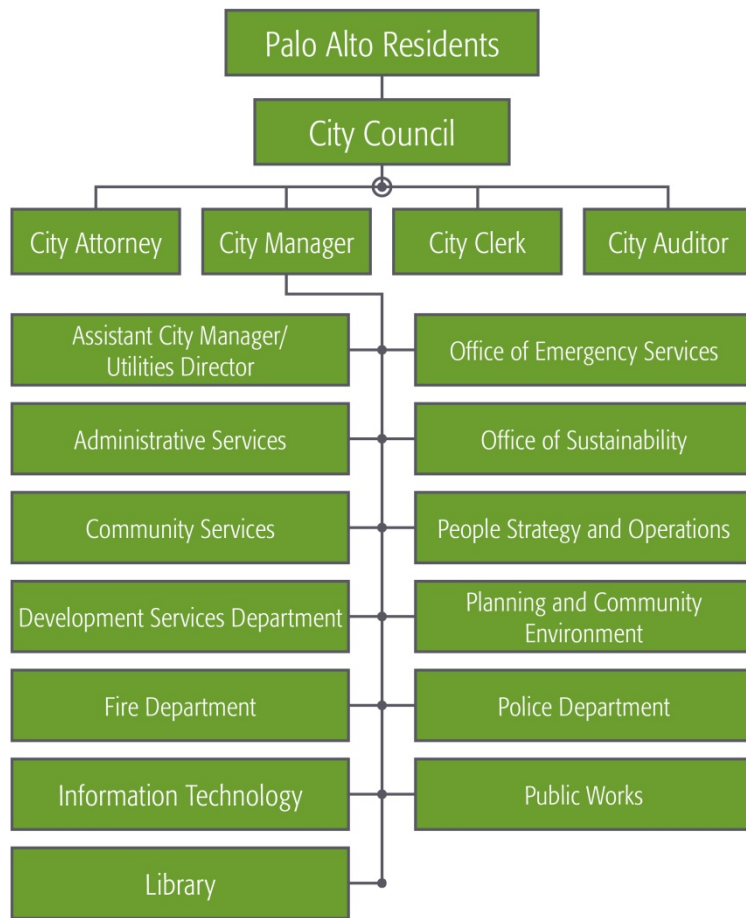
The City Council is served by four Council-appointed officers: the City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, and City Auditor. The organization of City departments and their major functions is illustrated in the following chart.

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Many issues affecting Palo Alto are regional in nature, and are best addressed by working collaboratively with other cities. Palo Alto believes that it has a responsibility to be an active participant in regional problem solving.

Figure G-1 City of Palo Alto Organizational Chart

CITY OF PALO ALTO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



BUDGET

The City of Palo Alto's budget as approved by the City Council reflects resource allocations consistent with City policies, goals, and priorities. It also effectively communicates an action plan for the upcoming fiscal year to citizens and staff, including program goals and the standards by which the delivery of services to the public will be measured.

Palo Alto maintains full transparency of its actual and adopted budgets. As part of the City's Internet-based Open Data Portal, citizens are able to explore and analyze City expenses and revenues, each broken down by a series of user-selected filters such as Departments, expense/revenues types, funds, and fiscal years. The City's budgets can be compared over time and the results downloaded in graphic form.

STRUCTURES OF DECISION MAKING

The Palo Alto City Council performs two levels of decision-making: Legislative, meaning adopting local laws and regulations, and Quasi-Judicial, meaning applying existing local laws and regulations based on evidence and facts. Legislative decisions typically affect many different properties; examples include the adoption of a zoning code update or a Coordinated Area Plan. Quasi-judicial decisions usually affect individual applications being considered for approval; examples include a Conditional Use Permit or approval of a subdivision map. Both types of decision-making must occur within a public forum – Council meetings – and both must be based “on the record,” meaning Councilmembers are limited in their ability to receive information outside the hearing.

A third level of City government decision-making is ministerial. Ministerial decisions are those that can be decided by applying an ordinance or regulation. These are objective, mandatory decisions based on fixed standards and measurements: whether, for example, a proposed use is allowed under the Zoning Code, or whether a new building has an adequate number of fire sprinklers. If a project meets the requirements, the City must approve or allow it. Most ministerial decisions are made at the staff level, and public input is not required.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

GOAL G-1 Effective opportunities for public participation in local government.

POLICY G-1.1

Delegate appropriate decision-making to the Planning and Transportation Commission, and Architectural Review Board with an appeal process to the City Council, to simplify and shorten the project review process for certain types of projects. [Previous Policy G-1]

Program G1.1.1 [Previous Policy G-2] Periodically review the suite of engagement options used to solicit citizen input and expertise on policy issues as needed. [Previous Program G-2]

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Policy G-
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POLICY G-1.2

Enhance two-way dialogue between residents, organizations and the City Council by providing access to information and opportunities for engagement through technology and other methods. [Previous Policy G-3]

Program G1.2.1 Continue use of neighborhood organizations, City website, local media, online technologies and other communication platforms to keep residents informed of current issues and to encourage citizen engagement. [Previous Program G-4]

Program G1.2.2 Provide access to communications technologies at City facilities, including public libraries and City Hall, and explore innovative locations for communication. [Previous Program G-6]

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CIVIC AND NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

GOAL G-2 Informed and involved civic and neighborhood organizations and residents.

POLICY G-2.1 Continue to provide information on the City’s website about neighborhood and civic organizations addressing subjects like earthquake preparedness, neighborhood beautification, event planning, how to communicate with City Hall, and guidelines for establishing and managing neighborhood and civic organizations. [Previous Program G-7]

POLICY G-2.2 Establish and enhance two-way communication between City staff and neighborhood groups . [Previous Policy G-5]

Program G2.2.1 Where feasible, assist residents with neighborhood improvement, beautification, and planting projects. [Existing Program G-9]

POLICY G-2.3 Support participation by community organizations in the governing process. [Existing Policy G-6]

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

GOAL G-3 Collaboration with regional partners and support on regional issues.

POLICY G-3.1 Support active participation of City Council members, other City leaders, and City staff in the resolution of regional issues that are relevant to Palo Alto. [Existing Policy G-7]

POLICY G-3.2 Encourage Palo Alto residents and businesses to actively participate in regional programs and organizations. [Existing Policy G-8]

VOLUNTEERISM

GOAL G-4 Active involvement of local citizens as volunteers.

POLICY G-4.1 Encourage citizen volunteers, including youth and seniors, to augment the delivery of community services. Where appropriate, allocate City staff time and resources to projects initiated by volunteers. [Previous Policy G-10]

Program G4.1.1 Continue and expand opportunities for volunteer assistance, awareness of public and nonprofit organizations serving the City, and public

recognition of individuals, groups, and businesses that provide volunteer services within the City. [Previous Program G-11]

MANAGING CHANGE

GOAL G-5 Stakeholder collaboration to effectively manage change.

POLICY G-5.1

Encourage the development of new planning and community advisory processes that emphasize collaborative exchanges and implementation ideas. Retain City Council authority over decision-making in these processes. [Existing Policy G-11]

Program G5.1.1 Use the pre-screening process to obtain early feedback from the City Council and the community regarding ordinance changes intended to facilitate specific development proposals. . [Previous Policy G-16]

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

GOAL G-6 More clearly defined procedures, standards, and expectations for development review.

POLICY G-6.1

Assist decision-makers, applicants, and residents with improved tools for understanding planning regulations. [Existing Policy G-12]

Program G6.1.1 Provide clear information across multiple communications platforms to guide citizens and businesses through the City review and approval process. [Previous Program G-18]

Program G6.1.2 Continue and expand customer-oriented process improvement efforts.

Program G6.1.3 Develop, use, and update when necessary, design guidelines for various geographic areas of the City or types of projects to supplement the Architectural Review Board Ordinance. [Existing Program G-20]

Commentary has moved beyond "materials" and now has mobile apps, technologies, online information, special programs like Building Eye, etc.