

March 16, 2026

The Honorable Sam Liccardo
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for City of Palo Alto FY 2027 Community Project Funding Requests

Dear Congressman Liccardo:

On behalf of the City of Palo Alto, I am pleased to submit the City's Fiscal Year 2027 Community Project Funding requests and respectfully request your support for three important local projects that will strengthen public safety, expand recreational opportunities, and preserve critical community infrastructure.

Each of the following projects represents a strategic investment in the health, safety, and well-being of Palo Alto residents while addressing needs that are shared by communities across the country.

Track Watch Rail Safety Program – \$2,000,000

The City of Palo Alto is requesting federal support to implement a one-year Track Watch Rail Safety Program that will place trained safety monitors at Caltrain grade crossings throughout the rail corridor. These monitors will provide a visible safety presence and assist in identifying and responding to potential safety risks along the rail right-of-way.

The Caltrain corridor runs through residential neighborhoods and near several schools in Palo Alto. Following several tragic fatalities along the rail line, including incidents involving youth, the City reinstated its Rail Safety Ad Hoc Committee in 2026. The City Council approved the committee's recommendation to reestablish a professionally staffed Track Watch program as an interim safety measure while broader infrastructure solutions are pursued. Federal funding would allow the City to implement a consistent, 24-hour monitoring program that enhances rail safety and supports community mental health prevention efforts.

Natural Grass Athletic Field Pilot Program – \$2,200,000

The City is requesting federal support to implement Phase Two of a pilot program evaluating whether high-performance natural grass athletic fields can provide increased durability and playability while reducing reliance on synthetic turf.

Communities nationwide face growing demand for recreational fields while also considering the environmental and health implications associated with synthetic turf surfaces. Palo Alto recently completed a comprehensive study evaluating natural and synthetic turf systems and identified the need to test whether modern field design and maintenance practices could allow natural grass fields to sustain intensive recreational use. This pilot project will construct and manage a high-performance sand-based natural grass field to evaluate whether advanced natural turf systems can significantly increase playable hours while maintaining safe and durable field conditions. Findings from the pilot will inform future field planning decisions in Palo Alto and could provide valuable guidance for other communities nationwide.

City of Palo Alto

Office of the Mayor and City Council

Cubberley Community Center Acquisition – \$2,000,000

The City is also requesting federal support to assist with the acquisition of a portion of the Cubberley Community Center campus, a longstanding civic facility that serves as a hub for arts, education, recreation, and community services.

The Cubberley campus currently hosts numerous nonprofit organizations, artists, and community groups that provide programming supporting youth services, cultural arts, recreation, and community wellness. The City plans to acquire an additional seven acres of the campus, much of which it currently rents, from the Palo Alto Unified School District in order to consolidate public ownership of a 15-acre portion of the site and advance a long-term redevelopment and rehabilitation plan. This effort will modernize aging facilities and expand access to community services, including performing arts space, recreation and wellness programming, classrooms, and gathering spaces. Federal funding would help offset acquisition costs and ensure that this vital community asset remains accessible to the public for generations to come.

Together, these projects represent thoughtful investments in public safety, community health, and civic infrastructure that will deliver lasting benefits to Palo Alto residents and the broader region. We respectfully request your support for these Community Project Funding requests and appreciate your continued partnership in advancing federal investments that strengthen our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vicki A. Veenker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Vicki" being the most prominent.

Vicki Veenker
Mayor
City of Palo Alto