



CITY OF  
**PALO ALTO**  
**COUNCIL RETREAT**

Saturday, January 24, 2026  
[www.PaloAlto.gov](http://www.PaloAlto.gov)



# AGENDA



## **A. OVERVIEW AND ORIENTATION TO RETREAT FOCUS**

Roll Call, Welcome by Mayor & City Manager, Introductions, Overview & Icebreaker  
Public Comment

BREAK

## **B. DISCUSSION AND SELECTION OF PRIORITIES AND METHODS**

Council Annual Priorities & Values Discussion  
Initial Discussion of 2026 Objectives

LUNCH BREAK

Mid-level Goals & Prioritizing  
2026 Priorities

## **C. DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEES/OTHER**

Organization Effectiveness in Council's Work

## **D. NEXT STEPS**

Wrap up - Next Steps & Adjournment



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# OVERVIEW & ORIENTATION

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January 24, 2026

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## TO ENSURE A PRODUCTIVE DAY

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We allow time for **candid** and **honest** feedback



We seek to hear **ideas and perspectives** of residents in our public comments before deliberations



We will **adhere to schedule** and allow the facilitator to move the conversation along

January 24, 2026

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# CITY COUNCIL



**Vicki  
Veenker**  
*Mayor*

**Greer  
Stone**  
*Vice  
Mayor*

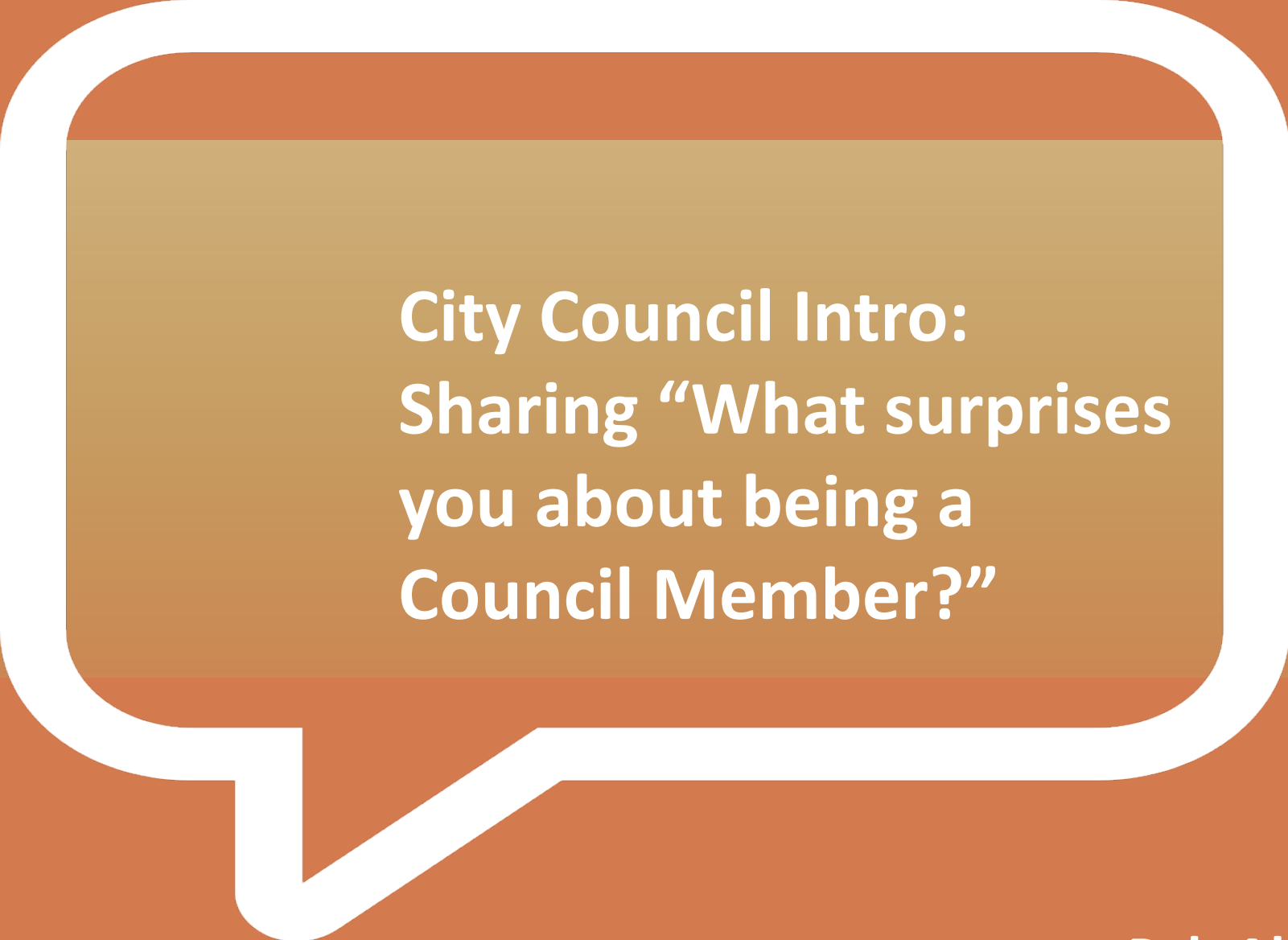
**Pat  
Burt**  
*Council  
Member*

**George  
Lu**  
*Council  
Member*

**Julie  
Lythcott-  
Haims**  
*Council  
Member*

**Keith  
Reckdahl**  
*Council  
Member*

**Ed  
Lauing**  
*Council  
Member*



**City Council Intro:  
Sharing “What surprises  
you about being a  
Council Member?”**

**January 24, 2026**

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## PUBLIC COMMENT

January 24, 2026

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# DISCUSSION AND SELECTION OF PRIORITIES AND METHODS

- Key inputs, including Council values, 2025 priorities, and staff draft 2026 objectives
- Discussion of terminology and process for selecting priorities
- Selection of 2026 priorities

**January 24, 2026**

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# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

- Staff released an Open Town Hall survey through OpenGov (12/18/25-1/13/26) and the forum had 291 visitors and gained 178 community responses, compared with 578 visitors and 431 responses.
- Other inputs:
  - Emails to the City Council
  - Feedback gained today as part of the public comment period
  - Palo Alto Community survey results
  - Neighborhood Town Hall meetings
- Question 1 and 2 were open ended, offering the community a forum to share varying ranges of perspectives
- Top responses were from the following neighborhoods: Midtown (15%), Duveneck/St. Francis (9.2%), and Barron Park (8.7%).



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

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**QUESTION 2:** Within the existing four annual priorities, share your feedback on outcomes for 2026.

## ***Climate Action & Adaptation, and Natural Environment Protection***

- Interest in climate action programs and policies, and concerns about these programs and cost considerations
- Feedback received on energy and electrification measures, plus concerns about these efforts and the impacts on climate change worldwide
- Generally positive feedback about environmental protection efforts
- Feedback about high utility rates, costs overall with electrification and prioritizing housing as a more immediate need

## ***Economic Development & Retail Vibrancy***

- Concerns about vacant storefronts
- Barriers exist with business permitting processes
- The need for more retail
- Interest in how Palo Alto is doing compared to nearby jurisdictions such as Redwood City and Burlingame



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

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## QUESTION 2: Continued

### ***Implementing Housing Strategies for Social & Economic Balance***

- Need more housing overall and the urgency to provide affordable and workforce housing options
- Perceptions of slow housing approvals and timelines
- Concern over high rise housing and density and interest in density in transit-oriented Areas



### ***Public Safety, Wellness & Belonging***

- More traffic enforcement and concerns raised over roadway behavior
- Perspective of not having Public Safety, Wellness and Belonging together as one priority
- Road safety for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Mixed comments about the need for more investment in emergency services and response times, and more access to services in specific neighborhoods
- Homeless concerns in downtown including parking garage safety
- Maintenance and access to fields and parks and recreation, such as expanding pickleball
- More investment in programs supporting physical activity and social connection





# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

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## QUESTION 2: Continued

### *Other*

- City processes and governance such as use of consultants, decision-making timelines, outcome tracking, and public communication
- Need for more transportation infrastructure (rail crossings, bridges, traffic signal timing)
- Comments about noise impacts such as aircraft overflights, street noise, equipment noise
- Use and design of public spaces such as car free streets and concerns about El Camino Real bike lanes





Council Values

**Council Values** – an enduring goal and intention to guide the work of the Council, which allow and maintain enduring intentions while also selecting annual priorities that reflect short-term projects and goals

Council Priorities

**Priorities** – a topic that will receive particular, and significant attention during the year

Council Objectives

**Objectives** – A discrete SMARTIE project or milestone intended to be achieved within the year

# COUNCIL PRIORITIES & VALUES

## COUNCIL VALUES

*The Palo Alto City Council will make decisions that:*

1. Balance revenues and expenses, now and in the future.
2. Are environmentally sustainable, now and in the future.
3. Will integrate equity into our decisions, considering how decisions affect people differently based on their identity or circumstances.
4. Create a healthy, safe and welcoming community for all.
5. Will safeguard public trust through transparent practices and open communication.
6. Will embrace innovation.

## COUNCIL 2025 PRIORITIES

**Climate Action & Adaptation, and Natural Environment Protection**

**Economic Development & Retail Vibrancy**

**Implementing Housing Strategies for Social and Economic Balance**

**Public Safety, Wellness & Belonging**

# COUNCIL 2025 PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVE SUB HEADERS

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## Climate Action and Adaptation, & Natural Environment Protection



- Modernize critical infrastructure for climate resilience
- Advance citywide & regional climate adaptation & environmental protection strategies
- Advance active and sustainable transportation
- Promote clean energy and reduce fossil fuel dependence

## Economic Development & Retail Vibrancy



- Activate and enhance key commercial districts
- Support economic development and retail vibrancy

## Implementing Housing Strategies for Social & Economic Balance



- Enable housing production through zoning and regulatory reform
- Advance affordable housing developments
- Support tenant protections and housing equity
- Improve citywide housing policy and planning

## Public Safety, Wellness & Belonging



- Modernize public safety infrastructure
- Expand wellness and community serving facilities and services
- Promote environmental & transportation safety

# COUNCIL OBJECTIVES OVERVIEW

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To help guide the Council selection of annual objectives advancing Council Priorities, initial Objectives are tied to SMARTIE Goals:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**chievable

**R**elevant

**T**ime-bound

**I**nclusive

**E**quitable



# 2026 POSSIBLE COUNCIL PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES



|  | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>2026 POTENTIAL CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES</b> |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 14   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 15   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 16   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**41 Total Possible Group 1 Objectives Advanced for Council discussion:**

- Draft Objectives are listed in two groups starting on packet page 7.
- The set of group 1 objectives represent staff’s initial identification of projects that are high priority and will require substantive City Council involvement.



How does this feel to the  
Council?

January 24, 2026

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# DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEES AND OTHER STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE GOALS

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## ADVANCING SPECIFIC GOALS

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- Last year, the Council continued its strategic approach to advancing its identified priorities, including identification of ad hoc committees to advance specific goals.
- Four ad hoc committees were established in addition to the Council's Standing Committees (Finance, Policy & Services, Council Appointed Officers, and City/Schools Liaison).
  - Climate Action & Sustainability
  - Cubberley
  - Rail
  - Retail
  - Downtown housing plan & SB79
  - Oversized vehicle regulation
  - Synthetic turf
  - Valley Water Shoreline funding reallocation

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**How does the Council envision its engagement in advancing the Priorities? If involving ad hoc committees, what should be the scope and goals for these committees?**



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# NEXT STEPS

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# ADJOURNMENT

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January 24, 2025

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# 2026 POSSIBLE COUNCIL PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES



## Climate Action and Adaptation & Natural Environment Protection (21 Total)

Group 1

Group 2

11

10

## Economic Development and Retail Vibrancy (13 Total)

Group 1

Group 2

6

7

## Implementing Housing Strategies for Social & Economic Balance (21 Total)

Group 1

Group 2

15

6

## Public Safety, Wellness & Belonging (12 Total)

Group 1

Group 2

9

3

10 Objectives not recommended

January 24, 2026

| Row | Objective  |
|-----|--|
| 7   | Adopt ordinance updates establishing additional Green Building Standards and Energy Reach Codes. Milestone: City Council consideration of ordinance for adoption by June 2026.   |
| 8   | Adopt Bird-Friendly Design standards. Milestone: City Council consideration in March/April 2026 of ordinance recommended by PTC in late 2025.  |
| 9   | Complete 2026 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan (BPTP). Milestone: Council adoption of 2026 BPTP  |
| 10  | Adopt an ordinance updating Stream and Creek Corridor Setback requirements. Milestone: PTC consideration of revised draft ordinance in Q2, 2026; Council consideration of draft ordinance in Q3, 2026.   |
| 11  | Advance recommendations for the Regional Water Quality Control Plant Biosolids Facility Plan. Milestone: Conduct community engagement, refine and review recommendations with Council Committee in 2026, and further develop implementation strategies in preparation for Council acceptance of the Biosolids Facility Plan in 2027. |
| 12  | Begin implementation of the City Facility Electrification Plan. Milestone: Council approval of design consultant contract and procurement of a contractor to construct projects at first two buildings.  |
| 13  | Implement Quarry Road Extension in Partnership with Stanford University, Caltrans and VTA. Milestone: Execute grant agreement with MTC and submit initial engineering package to Caltrans to confirm process.  |
| 14  | Advance design of Grade Separation projects at Charleston Road, Meadow Drive and Churchill Avenue. Milestone: Complete 15% design and select Locally Preferred Alternative for 35% design at each crossing.  |

| Row | Objective   |
|-----|---|
| 15  | Pilot electrification as a service, charging as a service, or creative financing programs to complement the City' s single-family, multi-family, and/or non-residential electrification programs, that can be scaled. Milestone: At least one new financing program is available to single-family, multi-family, and/or non-residential customers by the end of 2026. |
| 16  | Develop long-term Climate Action funding and financing strategies and scenarios for Council consideration. Milestone: Present strategies and scenarios to the Council Committee for consideration by December 2026.   |
| 17  | Develop and recommend for Council approval a multi-year grid modernization capital improvement plan focused on improving reliability and facilitating city-wide customer electrification by upgrading sub-transmission, substation, and distribution infrastructure. Issue the first tranche of debt financing in 2026.   |

# Economic Development & Retail Vibrancy Group 1

| Row | Objective  |
|-----|--|
| 29  | Development of a formal business retention/expansion program focused on supporting/growing existing Palo Alto businesses. And, develop a business attraction program to diversify local economy, increase the tax base for essential public services, and job creation to enhance Palo Alto’s community prosperity. Complete in Q2 2026.           |
| 30  | Adopt an ordinance expanding retail opportunities and strengthening retail resiliency, including refining retail and retail-like definitions and updating the retail preservation ordinance. Milestone: PTC review and recommendation in Q2; City Council review and action in Q3. Continued engagement with stakeholders prior to implementation. |
| 31  | Implement the California Avenue near-term signage plan replacing the El Camino Real and Oregon Expressway signs—by completing their procurement and installation.  |
| 32  | Continue design work on new parking structure in Downtown core (Lot D). Milestone: Complete entitlement process and design development phase by the end of 2026.   |
| 33  | Secure City Council approval for the California Avenue Outdoor Activation Guidelines. These guidelines will be finalized through continued stakeholder engagement that includes a representative mix of business owners and residents and a formal Architectural Review Board (ARB) review.  |
| 34  | Expanding on the Economic Development Strategies’ Guiding Principles, work toward activation activities and events in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Palo Alto Recreation Foundation to increase placemaking, investment, and branding opportunities (globally and with the corporate community).                                    |

| Row | Objective   |
|-----|---|
| 43  | Adopt an updated Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance to comply with State law and implement additional policy alternatives, including increased allowable square footage and condominium conversions, consistent with City Council direction (05.15.23). Milestone: Planning and Transportation Commission recommendation and City Council consideration of draft ordinance in Q2, 2026.  |
| 44  | Present findings to Council on a study that explores approaches to incentivize multi-family housing over office uses. Evaluate opportunities that make multi-family housing an attractive alternative to commercial office development, consistent with Housing Element Program 3.9A. Milestones: Seek guidance from Policy & Services Committee in Q1, 2026 and advance ordinance to Council in Q2, 2026.  |
| 45  | Partner with Santa Clara County Housing Authority to achieve construction timeline milestones for the Palo Alto Homekey project (which will provide transitional housing and services for unhoused residents).  |
| 46  | Develop and present land use and transportation alternatives for the San Antonio Road Area Plan, and select a preferred alternative based on community input and City Council direction for use in preparing the draft Area Plan. Milestones: PTC, community, and advisory bodies' input for alternatives in Q1, Council study section and selection of preferred alternatives in Q2. EIR NOP in Q3, policy recommendations in Q4.  |
| 47  | Develop and adopt Objective Development Standards for the South of Forest Area Coordinated Area Plan (SOFA), and present plan amendment options to replace subjective standards with objective standards for Planning and Transportation Commission and City Council consideration, consistent with Housing Element Program 3.7. Milestones: Create draft amendments to the municipal code and SOFA CAP, as applicable in Q2, 2026; Planning and Transportation Commission recommendation and City Council consideration of amended SOFA CAP and/or municipal code amendments by end of 2026. |

| Row | Objective   |
|-----|---|
| 48  | <p>Codify the R1/SB 9 interim ordinance by establishing objective development standards and increasing the maximum floor area for SB 9 units from 800 to 1,200 square feet, consistent with Housing Element Program 6.3A, and evaluate implications for R1 and SB 9 projects within the City’s Individual Review Program. Milestones: Planning and Transportation consideration of draft ordinance in Q3, 2026; Council consideration in Q4, 2026.</p>  |
| 49  | <p>Conduct and complete a study of short-term rentals and adopt housing and neighborhood preservation regulations that prioritize long-term occupancy, consistent with Housing Element Programs 4.2D–E. Milestones: report to City Council in Q3, 2026; prepare alternatives for Council and Planning and Transportation Commission review in Q4, 2026 or Q1, 2027, if requested. Housing Element anticipates ordinance adoption by July, 2027.</p>   |
| 50  | <p>Present draft Downtown Housing Plan scenarios to City Council, obtain direction on next steps, and advance preparation of the draft Downtown Housing Plan and environmental review, consistent with City Council direction on SB 79 implementation. Milestones: Seek direction from SB 79 and Downtown Housing Plan City Council Ad-Hoc Committee on next steps in Q1 and Q2, 2026 based on SB 79 implementation approach; advance Downtown Housing Plan based on direction received from City Council through Q4, 2026.</p>                             |
| 51  | <p>Adopt zoning incentives and development standards that support innovative housing typologies, including micro-units, intergenerational housing, housing for aging adults, students, and lower-income households, consistent with Housing Element Program 6.5B. Milestones: Conduct study session with Planning and Transportation Commission in Q1; present recommendations for Architectural Review Board consideration in Q2; Planning and Transportation Commission recommendation and City Council consideration of draft ordinance in Q4, 2026.</p> |

| Row | Objective  |
|-----|--|
| 52  | <p>Update and adopt development impact fees for public safety, government facilities, housing, transportation, parks, and community services, including completion of nexus and feasibility studies and establishment of fee waivers for low-income inclusionary units. (Housing Element Programs 2.1B; 3.1B &amp; C). Milestone: Present development scenarios and growth assumptions to Council for feedback by Q2 2026. Adopt Parks, Library &amp; Community Facility Fee Updates by Q3 2026. Milestone: Adopt additional fee updates by Q1 2027.</p> |
| 53  | <p>Issue Requests for Information or Requests for Proposals (RFI/P) to develop approximately 218 affordable or workforce housing units on City-owned surface parking lots. (Housing Element Program 1.4A). Milestone: Review draft RFI/P with Policy &amp; Services Committee by Q3 2026 to issue the solicitation process by year end.</p>  |
| 54  | <p>Implement Senate Bill 79 by developing and presenting implementation options and advancing a recommended approach for City Council adoption. Seek direction from SB 79 and Downtown Housing Plan City Council Ad-Hoc Committee on next steps in Q1 and Q2; present recommendations for City Council consideration and next steps on SB 79 implementation before July 1, 2026; develop SB 79 alternative plan if directed by City Council.</p>   |
| 55  | <p>Identify and designate additional Housing Element site capacity to maintain RHNA compliance and buffer by evaluating new opportunity sites to address anticipated capacity shortfalls in 2026, including impacts from development on faith-based sites and downtown parking lots. Milestones: Select consultant to provide technical analysis in Q1; Planning and Transportation Commission recommendation and City Council consideration of replacement Housing Element sites in Q3, 2026.</p>   |

| Row | Objective  |
|-----|--|
| 56  | Implement Oversized Vehicles Phase 1 work, including options for RV buyback and storage, new recruiting safe parking and enforcement/signage relating to detached/inoperable vehicles prohibition. Milestone Q2 - Present options on RV buyback and storage to Ad Hoc for input, then to Council, for consideration. Milestone Q2 - Implement, including installing permanent signage, and enforce detached/inoperable vehicles prohibition. Milestone Q3- Work with Ad Hoc on recruiting new safe parking and bring any potential projects to Council for consideration. (related to 2025 Objective 3.3.4). |
| 57  | Initiate and advance Oversized Vehicles Phase 2 work, including oversized vehicle permit pilot. Milestone Q4: Develop OSV permit pilot, including enhanced services and bring to Council for consideration. (related to 2025 Objective 3.3.4).   |

# Public Safety, Wellness & Belonging Group 1



| Row | Objective   |
|-----|---|
| 65  | Open 429 Bryant Street Community Center. Complete construction and any necessary partnership agreements to begin La Comida Senior Lunch Program at the facility by end of July, 2026; plan further work for general community center operations concurrently.   |
| 66  | Execute MOU with Santa Clara County for assignment of clinician to PD Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) in Jan 2026.   |
| 67  | Update the City's Natural Environment Element Update to comply with recent state law. Milestone: Prepare draft revisions for review by the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning and Transportation Commission, and City Council by Q3, 2026. Present Comp Plan amendments to PRC, PTC, and City Council by the Q4 of 2026.   |
| 68  | Update the Safety Element and develop an Evacuation Plan pursuant to SB 99, AB 747, and AB 1409. Milestones: contract with consultant to develop evacuation plan, present draft Safety Element amendments to Planning and Transportation Commission and City Council consideration with final submittal to state for review in Q3.  |
| 69  | Support Community Mental Health through provision of support for all ages through community partnerships, programs, and initiatives. Milestone: continue work with the Jed Foundation engagement to support youth mental health and suicide prevention efforts.   |
| 70  | Cubberley Project – Continue to advance the Cubberley Project focusing on community polling for potential placement of a measure on the November 2026 ballot, anticipated purchase of 7 acres from PAUSD, and securing partnership opportunities, and other funding sources.  |
| 71  | Develop and adopt updates to the City's seismic risk mitigation ordinance. Milestone: Seek policy guidance from Policy and Services Committee, review draft ordinance with Policy and Services Committee, and Council consideration of ordinance updates by Q4 2026.  |
| 72  | Pursue a natural grass athletic field pilot project to determine the best natural field type and maintenance to enhance playability and durability.   |
| 73  | Advance Quiet Zones at Palo Alto Avenue, Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road Rail Crossings. Milestone: Council approval of Notice of Establishment and Quiet Zone implementation at Palo Alto Avenue; and identification of funding and procurement of professional services for design of required improvements to establish Quiet Zones at Churchill, Meadow and |