

The City of Palo Alto's 2025 Federal and State Legislative Guidelines

These Guidelines reflect and activate the City Council's priorities; they do not supplant them. They work to guide staff and the City's legislative advocates on issues that are important to the City Council, and likely to become a legislative issue. These Guidelines are not rank-ordered and are meant to allow for a flexible and quick response by staff and advocates, without the need to return to the City Council to seek guidance. The Guidelines work in conjunction with the City Council-approved Advocacy Process Manual and the City Council action to do "Strategic Weighing in on Issues of Interest"¹. The City Council's annual priorities are also guidance for the City's legislative platform.

The below **Foundational Principles** represent the ideals that form the core of the City's policy agenda. The Legislative Guidelines all rise from and strengthen four foundational principles:

1. Promote Local Fiscal Sustainability:

Support measures that promote fiscal stability, predictability, financial independence, and preserve the City's revenue base and maximum control over local government budgeting. Also protect local revenue sources and prevent unfunded mandates.

2. Support Funding Opportunities:

Protect, seek, and increase funding for programs, projects, and services. Seek opportunities that allow the City to compete for regional, state and federal funding. Support funding for programs including, but not limited to, climate action, economic development, infrastructure investment, housing, transportation projects (such as road improvements, rail grade separations, bicycle and pedestrian safety, multi-modal transportation systems and transit-oriented development), air quality, water quality and local water reliability, parks and recreation, historic preservation, natural resources, hazard mitigation, public safety and public health.

3. Preserve Local Control:

Preserve and protect the City's powers, duties, and discretion to enact and engage in local processes and policy making concerning local affairs and oppose efforts and legislation from state and regional bodies that preempt local authority and do not align with City priorities. Advocate for longer lead times for implementation of new legislation that adversely impacts Palo Alto. Oppose items that preempt or reduce the authority or ability of local government to determine how to effectively operate local programs, services, activities, and governance.

4. Protect the health and safety of the community:

Support policies and funding that enrich the quality of life for the Palo Alto community with services that provide for a safe, fulfilling, and vibrant life. Support policies that promote equity.

¹ City Council, June 22, 2021; Agenda Item # 7; Staff Report # 12344
<https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=99035&repo=r-704298fc&>

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The **Legislative Guidelines** create the framework for organizing the City's policy interests, while guiding staff and contracted legislative advocates in their advocacy efforts on behalf of the City. The items below provide direction for the City's efforts when addressing reasonable government actions.

Transportation

The City supports government action that:

- Deters single occupancy drivers and alleviates local traffic congestion and promote active transportation safety infrastructure
- Supports local and regional public transportation
- Regulates technology that diverts traffic into residential neighborhoods
- Provides funding for rail grade separations, rail efficiency improvements, and other means of reducing the local impacts of regional transportation systems
- Streamlines funding between the state, federal, and local governments that help reduce the amount of time and resources it takes to fund and complete transportation projects.
- Sustains local, regional, and state funding sources for the development and maintenance of transportation and does not condition receipt of funds on non-transportation related factors
- Supports expansion and operations of public transit options throughout Palo Alto, especially funding for transit
- Supports state legislation that maximizes local control related to land use requirements near transit (especially if it impacts the City's approach to planning for complete communities)
- Supports local, regional, state, and federal policies that would reduce aviation noise and emissions impacts over communities, including passing noise ordinances and creating incentives for reducing impacts
- Supports coordination among transportation agencies regionally

Climate and Environment

The City supports government action that:

- Reduces GHG emissions and supports an equitable and just transition toward GHG reduction, and carbon neutrality goals, and electrification
- Maintains or expands funding resources for local governments to reduce GHG emissions
- Reduces airplane noise, health impacts, and/or airplane emissions
- Promotes residential, commercial, and vehicle electrification programs
- Promotes workforce development to provide increased workforce needed for electrification and grid modernization
- Promotes the use of renewable resources, water conservation, and the flexible use of existing resources

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- Continues support for a statewide ban on polystyrene containers and packaging materials
- Provides opportunities for staff, in partnership with the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority and other regional stakeholders, to advance efforts to improve the creek's watershed and floodplain (especially related to local bridges)
- Supports efforts to protect local communities from sea level rise and other impacts of climate change
- Supports responsible processing of recyclables once removed from Palo Alto and other communities, including promoting processing facilities and recyclables markets within the United States
- Strengthens and modernizes the State and Local electric grids and grid capacity
- Supports the protection of our natural environment, including open space, trees/tree canopy, and biodiversity

Financial

The City supports government action that:

- Supports the long-term stability of CalPERS and the ability of local governments to mitigate and manage with flexibility its pension obligations
- Protects the funding sources for the sustainable delivery of City services
- Supports the continued deductibility of tax-exempt municipal bonds and the restoration of Advance Refunding of Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds
- Supports the continuance of tax credits available at the federal level to support low-income individuals in achieving housing affordability and financial stability
- Supports the lowering or maintaining of voter thresholds for local revenue measures
- Supports maximum flexibility for local government in contracting and contract negotiations
- Supports reforms to local revenue financing tools for the purpose of supporting the development of affordable housing and public infrastructure
- Supports efforts to attract and retain resources for current and future smaller businesses in Palo Alto
- Preserves local discretion in the assessment, collection, and usage of development fees

Governance, Transparency, and Human Resources

The City supports government action that:

- Preserves local government's ability to manage its own employment issues, including, but not limited to hiring, evaluating, disciplining, and/or terminating and negotiating collective bargaining agreements with employees' representatives
- Supports reasonable regulatory efforts surrounding policies regarding cybersecurity, drones, shared mobility services, returning to Obama-era net neutrality regulations, and smart city initiatives

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- Provides for the incremental and thoughtful integration of artificial intelligence technologies
- Protects individual privacy and allows the City to safeguard customer information
- Maintain existing records collection and retention requirements
- Promote teleconferencing flexibilities under the Ralph M. Brown Act
- Allows the City to support the collaborative work of regional partners, trade associations, other local governments and organizations, and Joint Powers Authorities
- Provides for the equal treatment of all individuals

Housing

The City supports government action that:

- Supports reasonable housing policies that recognize local autonomy to maintain the local public process and preserve local government's ability to determine land use policies and development standards
- Provides flexible, ongoing funding for (a) affordable housing, (b) homelessness, and (c) infrastructure (such as parks, utilities, roads, and transit) required to support the increased housing production and keep pace with local development goals
- Promotes the development and enhancement of safe and affordable housing and accessible housing within the City for all economic segments of the population
- Promotes funding and tax incentives for the identification, acquisition, maintenance, adaptive reuse, and restoration of historic sites and vacant structures
- Fosters reasonable ratios between jobs and housing
- Supports the development and implementation of efficient and environmentally sustainable land use and building practices
- Supports the provision of greater lead times for Palo Alto to implement state legislation when necessary to comply with new land use and housing requirements within the local context
- Support property insurance availability and affordability initiatives
- Support RHNA reforms to promote fact-based standards that would further support goals of social and economic housing balance

Public Safety

The City supports government action that:

- Supports efforts which seek to modify policing services, including but not limited to alternative public safety models and funding to address community mental health issues, expansion of requirements regarding police data and rules regarding prior employment information transparency, and expansion of data and communications including radio encryption
- Provides for greater public safety support resources especially related to organized retail theft operations

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- Reduces weapons-related violence via the enactment of common-sense firearm reforms
- Enhances fire and emergency training and response capabilities. Mitigate fire safety risks. Advocate for funding and policy to mitigate wildfire risks and funding for fire services in general as well as funding for emergency services.
- Updates, implements, and refines processes, services, and programs affecting the City. This includes, but is not limited to, public safety reform efforts and streamlining reporting mandates
- Support legislation that would address ongoing safety concerns and help prevent acts of violence motivated by hate, including improving data collection and reporting
- Support legislation for increased resources for crime victims including victim support services and victim compensation processes
- Support measures that protect immigrants from unlawful or inhumane deportation efforts