



**SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** 3/12/2024  
**Time:** Special City Council Meeting 5:00 p.m.  
Regular City Council Meeting 6:00 p.m.  
**Locations:** Teleconference and  
City Council Chambers  
751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

**Special Session**

**A. Call To Order**

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

**B. Roll Call**

Present: Combs, Doerr, Nash, Taylor, Wolosin  
Absent: None  
Staff: City Manager Justin I. C. Murphy, Assistant City Manager Stephen Stolte, City Attorney Nira F. Doherty, Assistant to the City Manager/City Clerk Judi A. Herren

**C. Agenda Review**

The City Council pulled item Consent Calendar G1. and Informational Item H4.

**D. Special Business**

**D1. Annual City Council goal setting workshop (Staff Report #24-038-CC)**

City Manager Justin Murphy introduced the item.

Facilitator Steve Mermell guided the City Council through the presentation and opened City Council discussion on each section (Attachment).

The City Council discussed City Council Procedures Manual section “Placing Items on the City Council Agenda”:

- Non-agendized items
- Members of the public making request
- City Councilmember support to agendize an item
- Creation of a City Councilmember form for adding items (including how it relates to priorities and/or regular business needs)
- Creation of a City Councilmember form for City Councilmember Reports items

The City Council discussed challenges:

- Inability to allocate resources to every need
- Climate resilience/impacts to climate changes that are out of the cities control but impacts residents

The City Council discussed:

- How the public can advance their specific projects
- Status updates on projects that are not a top goal

The City Council took a recess at 6:14 p.m.

The City Council reconvened at 6:25 p.m.

- Lynne Bramlett spoke in support of retaining and combining current goals, directing goals to advisory bodies and include disaster preparedness as a top goal.
- Marcy Abramowitz with donated time from Joanne Goldberg spoke in support of prioritizing quiet zones.
- Executive Director of Menlo Spark Brian Schmidt spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal.
- Janet Benson spoke in support of retaining the Reactivation of Downtown as a goal.
- Gregory Faris spoke in support of prioritizing the West Menlo triangle annexation.
- Maya Sewald spoke in support of prioritizing public safety and automated license plate readers (ALPRs).
- Dorothy Dickey spoke in support of prioritizing public safety, ALPRs and decreasing police response times.
- Katherine Dumont spoke in support of prioritizing the implementation of the Housing Element, additional affordable housing and renter's protections.
- Menlo Together representative Adina Levin spoke in support of prioritizing the implementation of the Housing Element, Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and Environmental Justice Element.
- Canopy Director JP Renaud spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal.
- Jeff Schmidt spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal.
- Dashiell Leeds spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal.
- Susan Hinton spoke in support of prioritizing the banning of artificial turf and toxic plastics citywide.
- Jeremy Levine spoke in support of affordable housing and climate resiliency.
- Andrew Barnes spoke in support of retaining safe streets as a goal and prioritizing support for child and youth and infrastructure needs.
- Jenny Michel spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal and provided suggestions of adding projects to the current goals.
- Naomi Goodman spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal and including resiliency.
- Amar spoke in support of retaining safe streets as a goal.
- Tonia Lutch spoke in support of prioritizing public safety and ALPRs.
- Christy Peetz spoke in support of prioritizing quality of life issues when implementing the Housing Element, specifically recreation centers and safe streets.
- Katie Behroozi spoke in support of retaining climate action as a goal and prioritizing actions to minimize rental displacement.
- Pam Jones spoke in support of prioritizing an anti-displacement policy, a bi-annual report of apartment vacancy rates, funding items for the Environmental Justice and Safety Elements and additional infrastructure needs with the implementation of the Housing Element.
- Randy Avalos spoke in support of prioritizing parks and natural spaces and public safety and in opposition of ALPRs.

The City Council discussed goals mentioned by the City Councilmembers:

- Public safety
- Emphasis on climate action/resilience
- Recreation/quality of life/amenities
- Support for children and youth

The City Council engaged in the selection of priorities exercise selecting the top four priorities:

- Climate Action
- Emergency Preparedness
- Safe Streets
- Housing

The City Council discussed:

- What the city has exclusive/total control over to impact the residents of Menlo Park
- Refining the top goal labels

The City Council discussed planning-related project priorities:

- Single-family residential use permit requirements review
- Re-prioritizing planning-related project:
  - Single-family residential use permit requirements
  - Encourage/require community-serving, non-office ground floor uses in R-MU zoning district
  - Encourage/require community-serving, non-office ground floor uses along El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Ave
  - Park preservation ordinance
- Combining objective residential design standards Housing Element program and single-family residential use permit requirements
- Retail needs in the Bayfront area
- Addressing the zoning changes to non-office, ground floor uses along El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Avenue

The City Council engaged in the selection of the mission statement exercise selecting:

- The City of Menlo Park services the community by addressing current and future needs in alignment with residents' values and priorities.

The City Council discussed the mission statement and considered:

- The City of Menlo Park provides outstanding municipal services to the community by addressing current and future needs in alignment with residents' values and priorities.

The City Council engaged in the selection of the vision statement exercise selecting:

- Menlo Park is a healthy, and safe place to live, learn, work, play, exercise, socialize, and thrive.

The City Council discussed the vision statement and considered:

- Menlo Park is a healthy, vibrant and safe place to live, learn, work, play, exercise, socialize, and thrive.
- Menlo Park is a welcoming and vibrant city where the community can thrive.

The City Council engaged in the selection of the values exercise selecting the following:

- Integrity
- Inclusion
- Service
- Diversity
- Accessibility
- Transparency

The City Council received clarification that the mission statement, vision statement and values would be returned at a future City Council meeting for further discussion and consideration.

The City Council took a recess at 8:43 p.m.

The City Council reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

## **Regular Business**

### **E. Public Comment**

- Executive Director of Menlo Spark Brian Schmidt spoke in support of the electrification grant opportunity.
- David Yoshida spoke in support of permanent pickleball courts at Burgess Park and pickleball noise mitigations at Nealon Park.

### **F. Presentations and Proclamations**

F1. Proclamation: Women's History month

Mayor Taylor read the proclamation (Attachment).

### **G. Consent Calendar**

G1. Accept the City Council meeting minutes for February 13, 2024 (Attachment)

G2. Adopt a resolution initiating the Menlo Park Landscaping Assessment District proceedings for fiscal year 2024-25 (Staff Report #24-039-CC)

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Nash/ Wolosin), to approve the consent calendar, passed unanimously.

### **H. Informational Items**

H1. City Council agenda topics: March – April 2, 2024 (Staff Report #24-043-CC)

The City Council requested a community event item to return to the City Council.

H2. Transmittal of city attorney billing (Staff Report #24-040-CC)

H3. Informational report regarding regulation of wireless facilities in the public right-of-way (Staff Report #24-041-CC)

H4. City Council compensation (Staff Report #24-042-CC)

The City Council discussed the historical monthly City Council compensation.

## **I. City Council Initiated Items**

I1. Direction on automated license plate readers (Staff Report #24-044-CC)

- Randy Avalos spoke in opposition of pursuing of ALPRs.

City Councilmember Doerr introduced the item.

The City Council discussed addressing the increase in crime across the city, consideration of the outcome, but not necessarily the tool, privacy concerns, costs and effectiveness of ALPRs.

The City Council directed

- Direct the city manager to prioritize staff resources to prepare a formal staff report for further City Council consideration and/or action for the 2024-25 budget conversation.

The City Council received clarification on resource needs and ALPRs alternatives.

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Doerr/ Combs), to direct the city manager to prioritize staff resources to prepare a formal staff report for further City Council consideration and/or action before the 2024-25 budget conversation, 4-1 (Nash dissenting).

I2. Direction on building electrification approaches (Staff Report #24-045-CC)

- Executive Director of Menlo Spark Brian Schmidt spoke in support of exploring building electrification approach.

City Councilmembers Doerr and Nash introduced the item.

The City Council received clarification on staff time allocation and resources.

The City Council discussed adding to Environmental Quality Commission work plan.

**ACTION:** Motion and second (Doerr/ Nash), to direct the city manager to prepare a formal study session staff report for further City Council consideration, 4-1 (Combs dissenting)

## **J. City Manager Report**

City Manager Justin Murphy reported out on the Middle Avenue Complete Streets Project virtual meeting, upcoming Youth Advisory Committee flea market and current city recruitments for

advisory bodies.

**K. City Councilmember Reports**

None.

**L. Adjournment**

Mayor Taylor adjourned the meeting at 9:51 p.m.

Assistant to the City Manager/ City Clerk Judi Herren

These minutes were approved at the City Council meeting of April 2, 2024.

**City of Menlo Park**  
**City Council Workshop**  
*City Hall Council Chambers*

March 12, 2024



**Steve Mermell, Special Advisor**  
**Mary Locey, Consulting Manager**

# Welcome from Mayor Taylor



Mayor  
Cecilia Taylor



Vice Mayor  
Drew Combs



City Councilmember  
Maria Doerr



City Councilmember  
Betsy Nash



City Councilmember  
Jen Wolosin



# Opening Comments from the City Manager



City Manager  
Justin Murphy



# Today's Agenda



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Review best practices in governance

Receive City Council input on procedures manual update

Review City Council goals for FY 2024-25

Prioritize community development projects

Discuss and create consensus on mission, vision and values

Strengthen teamwork

Review next steps

Wrap up

# Workshop Ground Rules



**Listen to  
understand  
each other's  
point of view**



**Seek  
consensus**



**Assume good  
intent**



**Speak up if we  
need course  
correction**



**Stay focused**

# Bike Rack



Time  
management tool

Items to discuss at a  
later time



# Icebreaker



# Icebreaker Exercise



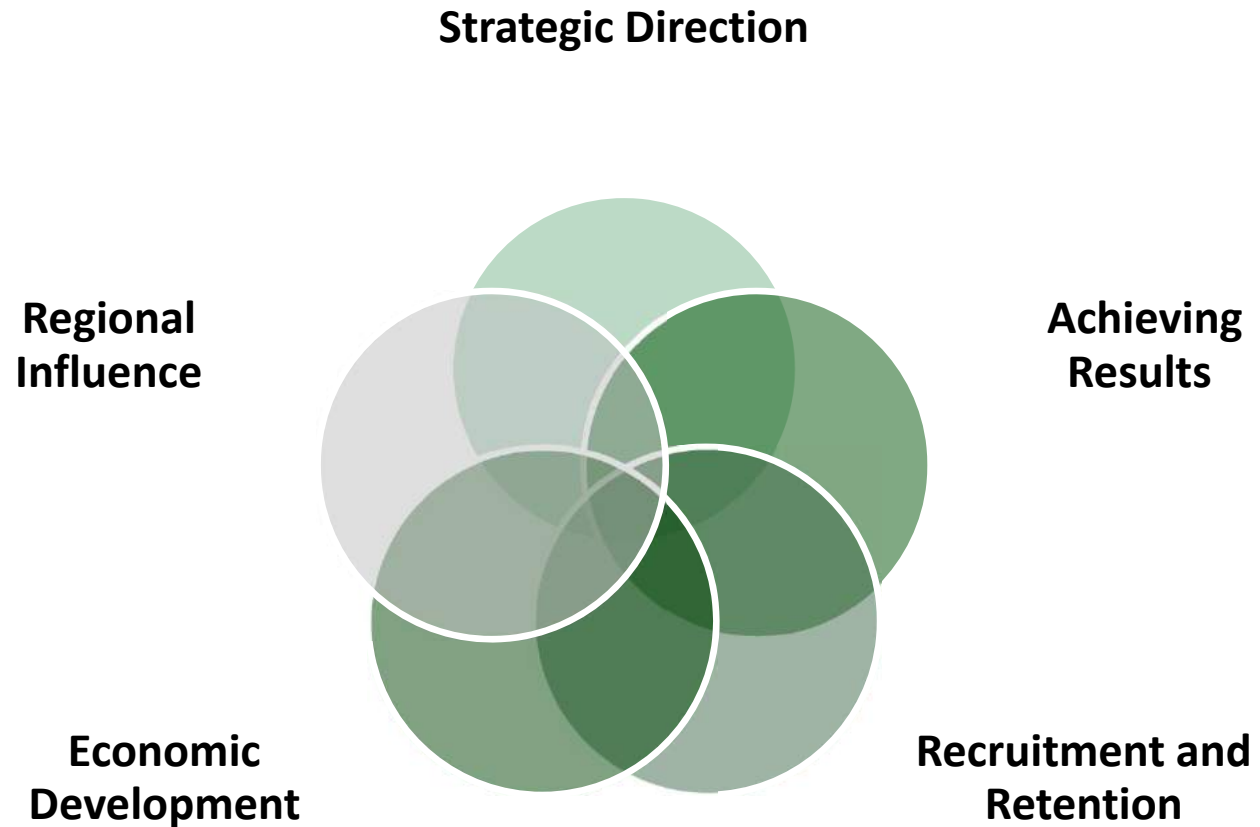
What was your first job?



What did you learn or take away from the experience?

# Why is Effective Governance Important?

**City Council  
teamwork  
affects how  
the City is  
perceived**



# Effective City Manager – City Council Teamwork

## *Makes for Good Policy and Solid Organizations*

### *City Council*

- **Respect City Manager's role** as chief executive
- Give the City Manager a heads up; **practice the “no surprise” rule**
- Focus on policy and **not get into the weeds**
- **Refrain from directing staff**, even informally
- Help create a **“no blame” culture**; do not criticize staff. If City Councilmembers have concerns, bring them to City Manager privately.
- Ask **questions in advance of City Council meetings** to get as many answered as possible

### *City Manager*

- Be **clear and direct** with City Council
- Translate City Council policy into **action and budgets**
- Provide heads up and practice the **“no surprise” rule**
- **Communicate** with all members of City Council **equally**
- Ensure that staff provides **options, clear analysis, and recommendations** to City Council
- Work to help City Council see the **“big picture”** including impacts of policy positions

*Best practices based on Institute for Local Government, League of California Cities, International City/County Management Association*



# Attributes of Effective City Councils

## Effective City Councils

- Develop a sense of team – a partnership with the city manager to govern the city.
- Have a clear roles and responsibilities that are understood and adhered to.
- Honor the relationship with staff and each other.
- Routinely conduct effective meetings.
- Hold themselves and the city accountable.
- Have members who practice continuous personal learning and development.

# Attributes of Effective City Councils

## Doing your part as a Councilmember

- Do your homework – read the agenda packet and send questions to the City Manager ahead of the Council meeting.
- Don't grandstand or pack the City Council Chambers.
- Be willing to compromise, understand it takes a majority to take an action.
- Be nice, be patient, be kind.
- Be respectful of city staff, they are professionals who seek to do good work. Understand they may not understand the political dimension as you do.
- Respect the role of the City Manager and work through them.



# Characteristics of Ineffective City Councils



- Don't regularly meet with the City Manager.
- Don't read the agenda packet before the City Council meeting.
- Don't seek consensus with their City Council colleagues.
- Grandstand.
- Attack staff publicly.
- Fail to transition from campaigning to governing.
- Pack the City Council Chambers with advocates for their position.
- Go around the City Manager to direct staff.
- Seek to relitigate issues that have been decided.
- Have a win-lose mindset.
- Don't see themselves as part of the municipal organization.

# Discussion of the City Council Procedures Manual



# Suggested Process for Placing Items on the City Council Agenda

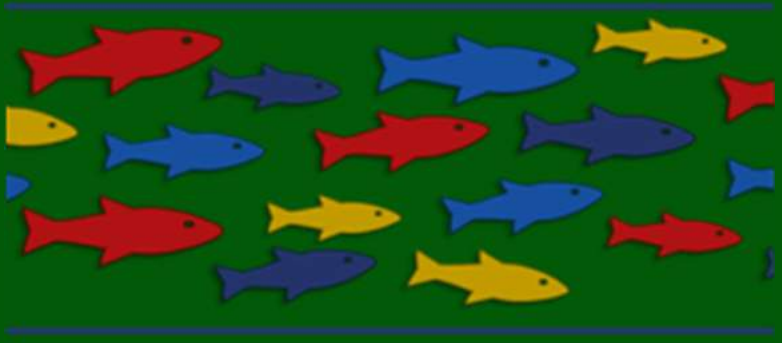
- City Councilmembers make request:
  - Via email to CCIN or to City Manager with Cc to Mayor no later than two business days before publication of the meeting agenda
  - Via verbal request during City Council reports at a City Council meeting
  - Item will appear under “City Council initiated items” for further discussion
  - City Council can direct City Manager to prepare staff report, direct item to advisory body, defer action to workshop
- Members of the public make request:
  - Via email to CCIN
- Non-agendized items:
  - City Council must make appropriate findings
  - Requires four-fifths vote
- Emergency items:
  - Item must affect public health or safety, like work stoppages, disasters, severe emergencies
  - Requires majority vote



# Discussion of Goals



# Goal Setting



We can't  
do  
everything



But we can do  
some things very  
well if we are  
focused

## Successful City Governments

- Have a **collaborative, trusting relationship** between the City Council and staff
- Select a **few key goals**, with staff to achieve them
- Respect the **ongoing work** of City departments as the **day-to-day operations** must be well managed; that takes time

# “Big Rocks”

Don't fill up the bucket  
with so many small  
rocks that there isn't  
room for the big ones

Put the **big**  
rocks in **first**

Then add the small  
ones where there is  
**room**

Stephen Covey  
"First Things First"



# Accomplishments cited by City Councilmembers



- Approval of the Housing Element
- Filling key vacancies
- Completion of park projects
- Completion of protected bike lane
- Zero emissions landscape equipment ordinance
- Return of community events that were on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic

# Challenges mentioned by City Councilmembers

Loss of revenue and increased operating costs

Staff vacancies, turn-over and in some cases lack of experience

Court ruling limiting the City's ability to take action on climate change

Elections by district promote parochialism and loss of citywide focus

Addressing loss of affordable rental units; illegal evictions and housing discrimination

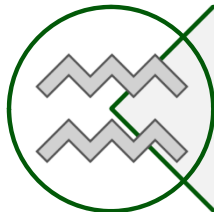
Effectively managing development both large and small

# Financial Outlook



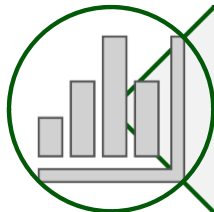
## General Fund revenues recovery

- Sales taxes show the first year of growth since the pandemic
- Hotel occupancy taxes have recovered



## Economic uncertainty

- Inflation, higher interest rates, lower investment returns, lingering supply chain disruptions, staffing challenges



## Long-term financial planning

- Evaluate the overall structural balance of the General Fund
- Plan for future capital improvements

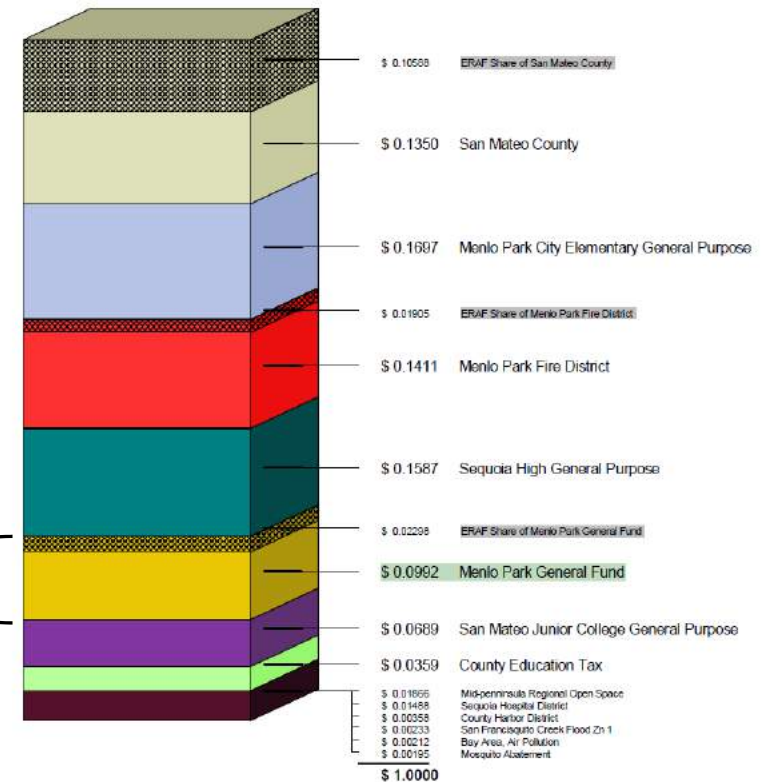
# Financial Outlook

## Monitoring and Forecasting Revenues:

### Property Taxes

- Most significant revenue source for the City
- Property tax revenue continues to grow, but the overall share of property tax revenue in the General Fund has declined since 2020
- The City only receives \$0.12 for every \$1.00 of property tax paid.

**HdL** Coren & Cone THE CITY OF MENLO PARK  
PROPERTY TAX DOLLAR BREAKDOWN



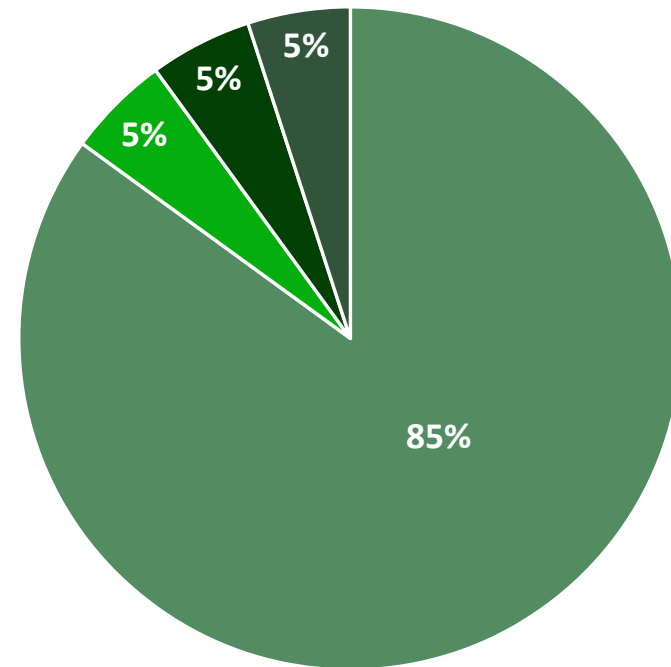
# Financial Outlook

## Monitoring and Forecasting Revenues: Vehicle License Fee (VLF)

- Significant impacts to VLF revenue in recent years
- Current CA State deficit of \$76 billion could reduce VLF contributions
- Current shortfalls:
  - Fiscal year 2023-23 shortfall is \$1.8 million  
(amount due = \$6.3 million)
  - Fiscal year 2023-24 shortfall is \$2.8 million  
(amount due = \$6.6 million)
- Uncertainty and fluctuations due to lag time for payments: in fiscal year 2022-23, the City received partial backfill for fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

# How Staff Allocate Their Time

Average Allocation of Staff's Time

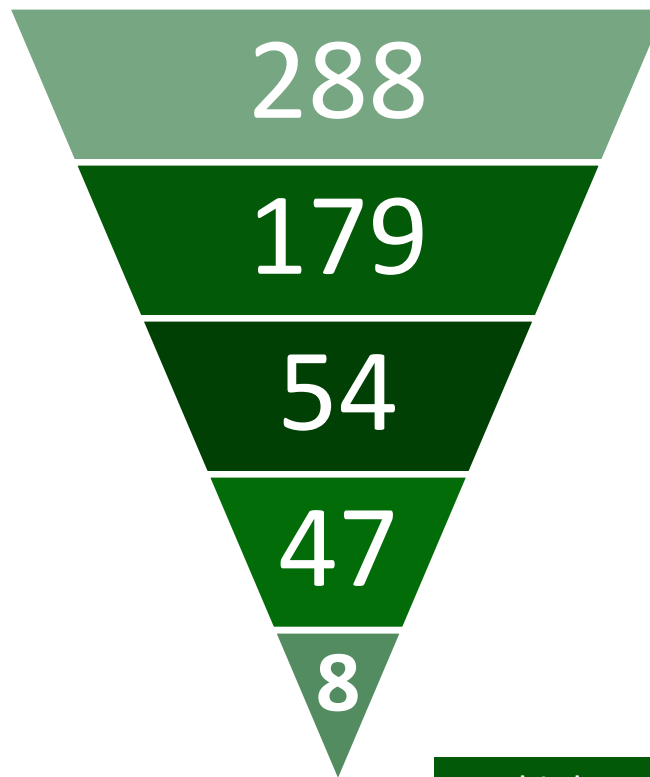


- Day-to-day delivery of municipal services
- Unforeseen challenges
- New initiatives
- Strategic improvements and training

# Staff Numbers at a Glance

Staff available to work on special projects or City Council initiatives include the Executive Team, Managers, and Management Analysts.

All have ongoing responsibilities in their roles and assignments.



## Total Staff

- The City has 288.5 authorized staff positions for FY 2023-24

## Operations Staff

- 179 of these position are filled by specialty trained operations staff

## Vacancies

- 54 of these positions are vacant

## Public Safety

- 47 of these positions are filled by sworn public safety personnel

This leaves 8 staff positions available to assist with special projects

# Status of Current Goals



Housing



Emergency preparedness



Climate action



Activating downtown/economic development



Safe streets



# Goals Mentioned by City Councilmembers

**Financial  
sustainability**

**Emergency  
preparedness**

**Climate action**

**Activating  
downtown/Economic  
development**

**Safe streets**

**Housing**

**Advancing equity**

**Support for children  
and youth**

**Addressing  
infrastructure needs**

# Community Input

## Main themes of **53 online submissions**:

- Overall, strong support for existing goals
- Climate action (63%)
- Safe streets (52%)
- Housing (41%)
- Emergency preparedness (25%)
- Activating downtown / economic development (21%)
- Other theme: quiet zone

# City service priorities – community survey

Identified in community survey in Nov. 2023 by Godbe Research

- **Maintain street and pothole repair** (28.3% much support/42.6% somewhat support)
- **Maintain parks, open space, sports fields and children & play structures at City parks** (33% much support/37.1% somewhat support)
- **Keep public areas healthy, safe and clean** (26.4% much support/44.1% somewhat support)
- **Maintain police 9-1-1 emergency response and preparedness** (30% much support likely/34.7% somewhat support)
- **Enhance emergency preparedness for storms, flooding and wildfires** (28.5% much support/39.8% somewhat support)
- **Provide safe sidewalks and bike paths** (32.3% much support/36.7% somewhat support)

# Public Comment



# Goals Dot Voting

*Select your top 4*



# Discussion



# Discussion of Community Development Project Priorities



# Housing Element – major projects

## *Currently underway:*

- Development of affordable housing on downtown parking lots

## *Comprehensive approach recommended:*

- Anti-displacement strategy
- Update to Below Market Rate (BMR) Guidelines

## *City Council direction needed at future meeting:*

- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) amnesty program
- Objective residential design standards



## Planning-related projects

*Undertake as staff capacity allows:*

- Encourage/require community-serving, non-office ground floor uses along El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Ave
- Encourage/require community-serving, non-office ground floor uses in R-MU zoning district
- Park preservation ordinance
- Single-family residential use permit requirements review

# Discussion of Community Development Project Priorities



# Mission, Vision and Values



MISSION



VISION



VALUES

# Mission Statement

A mission statement tells the ***purpose*** of the City of Menlo Park

- **Clearly states** the purpose of the organization – the reason for the organization’s existence
- **Short** enough to be remembered
- **Does not repeat** what is in the vision statement
- Is written in the **present tense** because it is what we do now

Key words/phrases mentioned in City Council interviews

Quality of life

Meeting  
community  
needs

Providing  
services to the  
community

Vibrant

Sustainable

Welcoming

Play/Playful

# Current Mission Statement

It is the mission of the City government to ensure that Menlo Park is a desirable and vibrant community in which to live and do business, and to respond to the values and priorities of the residents so as to provide for the community's current and future needs.

Explicitly, the City fulfills its function by:

- Addressing the needs of the residents through the City Council, the appointed commissions and the City staff.
- Providing easy and open access to information and encouraging dialogue, enabling residents to actively engage in civic life.
- Providing for the safety of its residents, businesses and visitors.
- Providing timely and responsive service.
- Providing special assistance to those in need.
- Functioning effectively, efficiently and with accountability.
- Creating a positive and desirable workplace environment for City employees.
- Managing change for the betterment of the City.
- Creating and maintaining a viable revenue stream and providing for the unpredictable nature of our economy.
- Implementing and maintaining City infrastructure, facilities and programs.
- Formulating sound environmental policies.
- Recognizing and supporting the City's diverse neighborhoods and population.
- Acting as a responsible member of the greater region.

# Mission – Draft Options

1.1. The City of Menlo Park services the community by addressing current and future needs in alignment with residents' values and priorities

2. The City of Menlo Park provides outstanding municipal services, safeguarding and improving the quality of life for all its residents.

3. Through the provision of exceptional municipal services, the City of Menlo Park supports its residents and business community to thrive and achieve success.

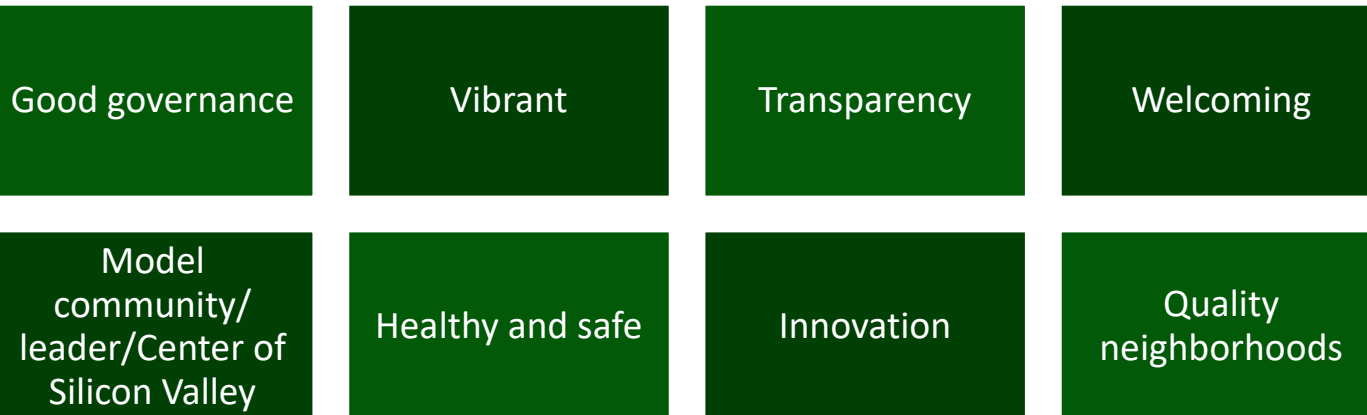
4. The City of Menlo Park exists to provide municipal services to the community it serves and to allocate limited resources for the benefit of all.

# Vision Statement

A vision statement is about the ***desired future*** of the City of Menlo Park

- ***Should be short enough*** to be easily remembered
- ***Does not repeat*** what is in the mission statement
- Is written in the **present tense**, as if the City is already there in the future

Key words suggested most frequently for Menlo Park's vision statement from the City Council interviews



# Vision – Draft Options

1. Menlo Park is a healthy, and safe place to live, learn, work, play, exercise, socialize, and thrive.

2. Menlo Park is a desirable and vibrant community in which to live and do business.

3. Menlo Park is a model of innovation and good governance at Silicon Valley's heart, fostering transparency, vibrancy, and quality living.



# Values

- Values **drives the behaviors** of all members of the organization
- Should be clear enough for people to **understand** their meaning
- Ideally limited to **three to five** so they can be easily remembered



# Suggested Values

Accessibility

Inclusion

Equity

Fairness

Diversity

Integrity

Efficiency

Transparency

Service

Neighborliness

# Dot Voting on Mission, Vision and Values



## Mission

- (1) Choose between one of the alternative draft mission statements
- (2) Place **ONE dot** by the mission statement you think best represents the purpose of the agency



## Vision

- (1) Choose between one of the alternative draft vision statements
- (2) Place **ONE dot** by the vision statement you think best represents the future of the agency



## Values

Select the **top three values** you think are most important for Menlo Park to embrace and place one dot on each of them.

# Dot Voting Results!



# Staying on Track with Priorities



Regular  
progress  
reporting

Hold off on new City  
Council initiatives until  
next goal setting cycle

# Best Practice Criteria for Adding Initiatives and Projects Mid Cycle

**Emergency** (natural disaster, pandemic, civil unrest)

**New outside funding** opportunity that is time sensitive

**New multi-agency opportunity** that cannot be delayed

**Community safety** issue that must be addressed in near term

Changes in **laws or mandates**

What **comes off** the plate if something goes on?

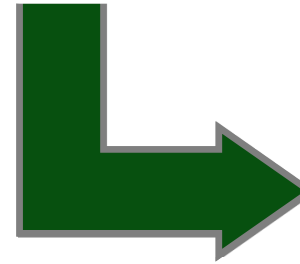
What are the **consequences** of shifting direction mid way?

*Otherwise wait until next priority-setting process*

# Next Steps



**Workshop  
report**



**City  
Manager's  
next steps**



# Closing Comments



*Please share a comment about what was useful about today's discussions.*





Thank you!



Steve Mermell | [steve.mermell@bakertilly.com](mailto:steve.mermell@bakertilly.com)  
Mary Locey | [mary.locey@bakertilly.com](mailto:mary.locey@bakertilly.com)

# Proclamation

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH MARCH 2024

**WHEREAS**, every March, Women's History Month provides an opportunity to honor the generations of trailblazing women and girls who have built our Nation, shaped our progress, and strengthened our character as a people; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout history, despite hardship, exclusion, and discrimination, women have strived and sacrificed for equal access and inclusion in communities across the country, fighting for and securing equal rights and opportunity throughout history as advocates for voting rights, reproductive freedom, abolitionists, civil rights leaders, suffragists, and labor activists; and

**WHEREAS**, these women have opened the doors of opportunity for subsequent generations of dreamers and doers, community leaders, elected leaders, educators, first responders, service members, doctors, scientists, child care providers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and essential workers in every industry, representing the very best of America; and

**WHEREAS**, despite significant progress, women and girls continue to face systemic barriers to full and equal participation in our economy and society, including disparities in economic security, health care, and caregiving responsibilities, especially for those who perform critical work, including those who care for our children and our families, who are too often overlooked, underpaid, and undervalued; and

**WHEREAS**, the full participation of women is a foundational tenet of democracy and the strength of our community rests on whether we make it possible for every person to contribute to our growth and prosperity; and

**WHEREAS**, as a community, we must join our voices with the chorus of history and push forward with unyielding faith to forge a more equal society for all our daughters, granddaughters, and great granddaughters – one where a woman's power is limited only by the size of her dreams and the boldness of her imagination, and where she does not need permission to pursue her fullest potential; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED**, that I, Cecilia Taylor, Mayor of the City of Menlo Park, on behalf of the City Council and City, do hereby proclaim and celebrate March 2024 as Women's History Month in Menlo Park.

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Cecilia Taylor, Mayor  
March 12, 2024