December 10, 2019

Dear Mayor Filseth and Council Members:

Each year is customary that the Chair of the Planning & Transportation Commission (Commission) issues a report to the City Council (Council), serving to update on the actions and activities of the Commission over the past year, and highlighting some potential visions and next steps for the coming year. This letter serves that purpose. It begins with an update on the goals of the year, follows with a summary of highlights of the Commission's actions and activities during 2019, and concludes with potential visions for 2020.

2019 Goals
While the Commission cannot set goals, agenda, or schedule, we began the year with a strong consensus among the members that we wanted to be action oriented. We had deeply invested in the 2018 Housing Work Plan and policies such as the Housing Incentive Program in 2018, and all wanted to see action, particularly in helping address acute affordable housing issues facing our community.

We began the year with a retreat, which included a team building session with a group facilitator, followed by a dialogue regarding our interests. We developed topics for inquiry that we wanted to educate ourselves and the public on—potentially offering the opportunity to explore and experiment with unique solutions in the City. Key questions at that point spanned the topics of housing and transport and included:

Housing
- How do we bring funding, resources, and information for affordable housing to the table?
- What are outreach efforts to get more affordable housing projects in the pipeline?
- Should we begin a dialogue regarding a policy for employer-provided housing for City employees?
- What are best practices in incentivizing approved projects to break ground?

Transportation
- What is our comprehensive off-street / on-street parking strategy? What can we do to better understand parking dynamics, information as well as auto ownership? How can we innovate in this area?
- Should we have policy to manage cut-through traffic and curbside pick-up and drop off?
- What kind of new mobility should Palo Alto be pursuing? Why have we not engaged in a micro-mobility or self-driving shuttle pilot? What are the obstacles?
2019 Accomplishments

We reviewed a number of important projects throughout the year. Our review included review of development proposals, transportation plans, program and policy initiatives. These included the following notable projects:

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plan
- Cubberley Master Plan
- Mercedes/Audi Dealership
- Newell Bridge Replacement
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Comprehensive Plan Compliance and implementation of Comprehensive Plan EIR mitigation measures
- Assigning Affordable Housing combining District to El Camino Real property

The Commission reviewed and recommended ordinances related to promoting housing opportunities in multi-family and commercial zones, rooftop decks in the CD-C zone, zoning amendments to enable hotel and multi-family housing, non-complying facilities, wireless communication facilities, and subdivisions in the R-1 zone related to historic preservation.

The Commission conducted a public scoping meeting allowing comments for Environmental Review of a mixed-use project on San Antonio Road using a Housing Incentive Program, and reviewed and commented on the Draft EIR for the Castilleja School Project.

The Commission reviewed and commented on the City’s transportation and parking management strategies, on traffic safety projects and residential parking programs, parking innovations, and plans to address conflict between ADA and electric vehicle charging stations and bike lockers.

The Commission also reviewed and commented on several subdivision maps and a fence variance.

We remained efficient in our meetings and worked to integrate two Commission-requested study sessions to educate ourselves and the public on innovations in planning and transportation. These included informational talks by innovators that related to the questions we posed during our retreat:

- Shoup Parking Technology Study Session: Chair Riggs and Vice Chair Alcheck Have Invited Evan Goldin to Make a Presentation to the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) Regarding his Experience with Innovative Parking Strategies. The presentation and discussion included new technologies to allow changes in parking usage, allocation and management. Evan Goldin is a Palo Alto native and Cofounder of Shoup Inc.
- Cohousing and Coliving Study Session: A Study Session Regarding Cohousing and Coliving With Presentations from Cohousing and/or Coliving Owners and/or Operators in the Bay Area, and Commissioner Discussion and Questions. StarCity and Bungalow are coliving startups founded in San Francisco that have expanded to other communities. Presenters from StarCity included Jon Dishotsky, CEO & Cofounder, and Eli Sokol, Senior Development Manager. Presenters from Bungalow included Bryan Connolly, Head of Field Operations, Alex Canedo, Bay Area General Manager, and Ali Nichols, Head of Strategic Initiatives.
Vision for 2020
Given this platform, looking toward 2020 I believe there is opportunity to continue educating the commission and public about best-practices in planning and transportation. There is also a distinct opportunity to begin applying some of these ideas through micro-experiments. During our 2019 retreat the idea was floated about giving Commission a budget to begin experimenting with some of these innovations. In this light, there are a handful of small things we could begin to experiment with in 2020, that could inform the future of how we deal with housing and transportation in our city.

• Employer-Supported Housing Dialogue and Partnership: First, I believe the City could initiate dialogue with employers about housing through the Commission as an active way to encourage unit production by and for local companies. This could include private companies who might be interested in partnering to build workforce housing. This could include housing for public employees and teachers with families who do not qualify for affordable housing. Public-private or public-public partnerships could lead to untapped production in this space.

• Parking Pricing Experimentation: The Commission has long-standing interest in discussing parking and wayfinding. While we have not yet had a window in to this topic, there is an opportunity to do micro-pricing experiments in the context of the Residential Parking Programs. For example, exploring if a small amount of daily paid parking issued via barcodes printed at home could help understand the market for parking in areas of acute impact and perceived need downtown and near California Avenue CalTrain areas. If such a program were successful it could provide another way of relieving neighborhoods than RPP while bringing in revenue to the city.

• Travel Behavior Experimentation: Similarly to parking, the City could begin to take some different approaches to travel demand management and transportation programs. In light of this, I believe a paid cycling or walking program that used financial and social incentives to nudge sustainable travel could have great efficacy in our City. Some of my own research suggests, that people respond to financial rewards encouraging them to travel sustainably but also are very averse to losing those benefits (loss aversion theory). A micro-pilot of this kind of program for desired travel. Likewise an electric-bike or electric-scooter rebate program could be equally powerful at encouraging individuals to drive less. It would be unique if the City could begin running such experiments as a prototype for future policy.

While these ideas are my own, the Commission will work to define more precise goals over the first month of 2020. I do believe the ideas expressed reflect the energy and urgency that all of us share for tackling challenging issues and finding innovative solutions in our community. We want to see action and want to be tasked with helping move our community to be more economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable than it already is.

I know I can speak for all of us in thanking you for the opportunity to serve.

Best Regards,

William (Billy) Riggs