



Palo Alto Neighborhoods

An independent umbrella group that supports Palo Alto neighborhoods

February 11, 2025

Dear Mayor Lauing and Members of the City Council,

Palo Alto Neighborhoods strongly supports full staffing of the Mitchell Park Fire Station for both the ambulance and a fire engine concurrently. We understand that it requires 5 personnel total 24x7. As concerned residents, we believe ensuring optimal emergency response capabilities is not just a matter of public service but one of public safety, well-being and equity across neighborhoods.

We understand this is a budgetary matter and that there are many competing demands for limited funds. We ask Council to allocate the funding to fully staff and equip the fire station as soon as possible:

South Palo Alto and Midtown deserve parity with other sections of the city. Does it make sense for an entire quadrant of the city to be put at risk? Why are other stations fully equipped and staffed and South Palo Alto put at risk?

Fully staffed stations alleviate the burden on neighboring stations, promoting a more balanced and efficient distribution of emergency services throughout the city. Are neighborhoods with full service emergency teams more important than Midtown and South Palo Alto? Data based on current response times and average citywide response times reflect current conditions. We do not have data about where the calls are that exceed the 8 minute standard. Without that data, the City cannot show that South Palo Alto and Midtown are *not* underserved, but an objective analysis of the distance to serve these areas from nearby fire stations shows that they are indeed underserved, particularly during high traffic (and high train) periods.

Firefighters deserve a crew complement, not a skeleton crew. We worry that current emergency crews will get burned out due to understaffing by not fully staffing an ambulance and the proposed fire truck. We understand that staff routinely log overtime hours to make up the difference between what is budgeted and what is needed. Doesn't that put the health and safety of our first responders at risk?

South Palo Alto will see significant expansion as the San Antonio Corridor and adjacent streets are poised to add high-density housing and more businesses. An increased demand for emergency services must be planned for. But even before new neighbors and businesses take occupancy, during periods of construction, before sprinkler systems are hooked up, these areas are under even more of a fire threat. South Palo Alto is densely populated and the wind could easily carry embers from a construction fire into adjacent neighborhoods.

To leave the Mitchell Park Fire Station under-resourced will lead to continuation of delayed responses (which the City data does not refute), increased risks to both residents and emergency personnel, and greater potential for loss during critical incidents such as fires, medical emergencies, and natural

disasters. By planning now for full staffing at all times, we can be ready for the increased risk. Earthquakes occur at any time, not merely when someone may choose to fully staff a fire station.

Investing in the full staffing of the Mitchell Park Fire Station is an investment in the safety, resilience, and security of our community. It demonstrates a commitment to protecting the lives and property of Palo Alto residents and reflects the values we hold as a city that prioritizes public health and safety.

We urge the City Council to allocate the necessary resources to ensure that the Mitchell Park Fire Station is fully staffed and equipped to meet the growing needs of our community. After all, Measure K provided increased funding for public safety. Put it to good use. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your continued dedication to the safety and well-being of Palo Alto residents.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Becky Sanders
Sheri Furman
PAN Co-Chairs