

Full Answers from JR Fruen · 2022 WBC City Council Candidate Survey

<p><i>Increased biking can reduce traffic and improve community health and sustainability. What would you do to increase bike use within Cupertino?</i></p>	<p>I would advocate for the improvement of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, such as separated and protected bike lanes, bike-ped trails, and a focus on walkability/bikeability in new developments to ensure that residents and those accessing amenities, jobs, and schools in Cupertino have viable alternatives to driving. I'd utilize the city's Public Information Office and its outreach capabilities to encourage and popularize more extensive use of bicycles. I would spearhead the creation and implementation of a new Cupertino Bike Plan (now that the 2016 plan has expired) to ensure that we have shovel-ready projects eligible for grant funding).</p>
<p><i>Many new sidewalks cannot be added in Cupertino due to decades old zoning of streets as rural which do not require homes to have sidewalks, and homeowners that oppose adding them there. What are some other ideas you have to improve walkability in our city as adding them in these areas is difficult or impossible?</i></p>	<p>We can add new urban street furniture and increase the tree canopy to encourage more walking, especially in the Heart of the City Special Area. When drivers start to expect more pedestrians, they are more likely to watch for them. We are also seeing deadly heat waves that further deter our communities from venturing outside for extensive periods of time. More shade could help combat this. We can pilot new pedestrian-oriented areas as well. Torre (Cupertino library/City Hall) should be a primarily pedestrian walkway. We should explore the creation of pedestrian priority spaces https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/streets/pedestrian-priority-spaces/. Pedestrian safety could be improved through traffic calming measures such as speed tables, lowered speed limits, curb extensions, or chicanes.</p> <p>For future projects, we should encourage zoning and land use regulations that further promote walking, rather than hinder it. In particular, we should orient new development around walkable communities that prioritize mixed-use development that allow people to live, work, study, and play within walking distance. We should enact a pre-defined public benefits package modeled off the California Density Bonus Law to incentivize new development to offer pedestrian and other non-vehicular transportation improvements in return for acceptable development standard concessions. The city's revision of the Housing Element offers an unprecedented opportunity to develop such a policy.</p>
<p><i>What is your view on removing some parking (<10 spaces) to allow for bicycle right-of-ways when doing so improves student safety near schools?</i></p>	<p>Our infrastructure should prioritize safety first. One of the primary impediments to increasing biking in the city is a perception among roadway users that biking isn't safe. Increasing both the actual safety of riders and the perception of that safety is key to increasing biking as a primary means for students to reach school. To the extent that removing some parking results in actual and perceived safety improvements for cyclists, then that strikes me as a reasonable compromise on parking needs. By virtue of reducing the need for driving to school, we will more quickly reach our local GHG emissions goals and improve the overall safety of roadways and reduce the level of traffic congestion near schools, all of which are important public benefits.</p>
<p><i>How have you personally advocated for proven improved walking or biking in Cupertino or the surrounding areas? Examples could include Safe Routes to School work, supporting new infrastructure through signing a petition, or by advocating by speaking as a resident at a City Council or at a Bicycle Pedestrian Commission meeting.</i></p>	<p>I have provided public comment in support of numerous walking and biking infrastructure improvements at public meetings, including before the Bike-Ped Commission, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. In particular, I have commented in support of the Regnart Creek Trail, the Carmen Bridge, and the Stevens Creek Trail--including staying until 4:30 am in support of the feasibility study for the RCT. As Policy Director for Cupertino for All, I have ensured that improving walking and biking infrastructure are central planks to the organization's land use reform platform, and have made it a point to consult with Walk-Bike Cupertino, its board members, and other cycling advocates on Cupertino and regional policy priorities on a routine basis.</p>

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<p><i>Why or why not would you support giving the right-of-way path easement at Lozano Lane to the local HOA (closing it to public use) which was planned to connect to the Regnart Creek Trail?</i></p>	<p>The easement at Lozano Lane was conceded to the public when the homes there were approved for the specific purpose of increasing walking access. To give away this public benefit would appear to damage the overall functionality of the Regnart Creek Trail without the public receiving anything in return. When the Council administers public benefits and public rights, it should prioritize the benefit of the whole community. Vacating this easement is not consonant with that principle. Therefore, absent extraordinary circumstances or the opportunity for a greater public benefit, I would not support vacating this easement.</p> <p>The Council has already spent almost \$2 million in mitigation to support residents and property owners abutting the Regnart Creek Trail in order to increase privacy measures so that neighbors feel more comfortable with the new trail. City goods—here, in the form of a public right to use land—should be used to help all residents of Cupertino. Council strikes the better balance by retaining this easement.</p>
<p><i>The Cupertino 2016 Bicycle and 2018 Pedestrian Plans prioritize infrastructure projects based on many factors derived through community input such as need and safety. What do you think is the role of Councilmembers in adjusting the prioritization of those lists of projects? Do you support building the Carmen Bridge, which is next in the list?</i></p>	<p>I think councilmembers should prioritize projects that are most feasible first and that best respond to the city's longer term, systemic mobility plans (like a new Bike Plan). Doing so promotes rational planning and ensures that we can fund the projects we plan for. In particular, we should focus on projects that have the highest safety improvement impact or that respond to long-felt needs that would increase the viability or safety of walking and biking in Cupertino. The Carmen Bridge project falls into this category and I support its construction.</p>
<p><i>Should the city of Cupertino pay for improvements, such as fencing, on private properties of residents near new trails or other infrastructure projects? If yes, then approximately what percentage of the total project cost would be acceptable to spend on this?</i></p>	<p>The city should avoid or limit the expenditure of public funds on private improvements near new trails and walk/bike infrastructure and should engage with neighbors early in order to assess and resolve potential issues. The public right-of-way is the public right-of-way and its value should inure to the public as a whole. In some instances, such as re-alignment of entry-ways to ensure safe use of the new infrastructure, this may be impossible to avoid, but public expense on private improvements should not be allowed to balloon. I'd be deeply skeptical of such costs in excess of 10-20%. In order to avoid protracted community division over such improvements, early and open conversations with affected residents and property owners is key. More of our projects should follow the model of "Lowenthal Lane" so as to avoid the difficult community discussions engendered by the Regnart Creek Trail.</p>
<p><i>The 2016 Cupertino Bike Plan has expired, but the Bicycle Pedestrian Commission choose not to create a new one in the last two years of workplans, which puts city grant funding at risk. Do you support creating a new one? Please explain why or why not.</i></p>	<p>Not only would I support a new Bike Plan, I would spearhead the effort to craft a new one. Ensuring that we have access to grant money by virtue of having shovel-ready projects is essential to building out new bike infrastructure on a reasonable budget.</p> <p>The city's bike plan should be more dynamic (and reflective of new information, like new goals, and collision data) and should receive periodic updates as a key feature of the city's Mobility Element of the General Plan.</p>
<p><i>Do you feel it is necessary to appoint Bike Ped Commissioners who regularly walk or bike within the city and have a track record of supporting walking and biking infrastructure projects in Cupertino? Why or why not?</i></p>	<p>Yes. An important change I would make would be to appoint commissioners that are pro-bike and pro-pedestrian to the Bicycle-Pedestrian Commission. Too many of council's recent appointees to this Commission express positions fundamentally opposed to improvements to walking and biking, and which prioritize vehicular traffic instead. This result invalidates the purpose of the body and makes further progress in these areas very difficult. In the course of designing the city work plan, I would also strongly prioritize bike-ped improvements (being proactive).</p>

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<p><i>What would you like voters, including all the members of Walk-Bike Cupertino, to know about your position on walking and biking in the city?</i></p>	<p>My campaign focuses on making our cities center the needs of everyone and their preferred transportation types, rather than singularly focusing on automobiles. To achieve this vision, we need to transition our city plan to one that intentionally also promotes walking, biking, transit, and other non-car forms of transportation. In doing so, our residents will reap the benefits of a city that is not built entirely around cars, and the city can focus on making alternative forms of transportation far more convenient.</p> <p>I am the candidate who best understands that this vision should occur simultaneously with our state-mandated requirement to plan to build more housing in Cupertino. We can use the Housing Element update to create beautiful, affordable, mixed-use communities designed to promote walking and biking, and push developers to build people-oriented projects, rather than car-centric ones, through tactful and productive negotiations. As an attorney, I'm especially well-positioned to negotiate such compromises.</p>
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