

The Cubberley Site

The 35-acre Cubberley site, located at 4000 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto, operated as Cubberley High School from 1956 to 1979. Beginning in the late 1980's, the City began leasing portions of the facilities from the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) at the site. Today, the City operates the areas of Cubberley it controls as a community center, using some of the space for classes and activities in arts, culture, athletics, and sub-leasing additional space at City-subsidized rates to various non-profit and community serving groups. The current lease agreement expires December 31, 2029¹.

Today, the City owns eight acres of the 35-acre site. PAUSD owns the remaining 27 acres, most of which are leased to the City. There are currently 23 tenants and 24 artists leasing space at Cubberley from the City and dozens of groups renting the theater, pavilion, classrooms, and athletic fields from the City. Combined, these groups provide the community with programs that support health and wellness, childcare, education, and visual and performing arts. PAUSD uses its retained space for educational purposes and staff offices and has leases with some third-party tenants. The parking lot in the southeast corner of the property houses portable trailers as a temporary site for Hoover Elementary School during construction at the school's site. A current site map can be found on the City's website².

Several master planning efforts have been completed over the years to reimagine and improve the Cubberley site, with the most recent being completed in 2019³.

Memorandum of Understanding with PAUSD

In October 2024⁴, both the City Council and Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD or District) Board of Education approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) related to the future of the Cubberley site. The MOU outlines key terms and conditions for the purchase and future planning of Cubberley. The land purchase, which would transfer ownership of seven acres from PAUSD to the City, is contingent on voter approval of a bond measure in November 2026. This condensed timeframe requires development of a master plan for the site by March 2026, conduct stakeholder and community engagement and outreach, polling, financial analysis, CEQA analysis, and other critical tasks. The addition of the seven acres, plus the eight acres already owned by the City of

¹ City Council, December 2, 2024: <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=112707&repo=r-704298fc&searchid=c3e3ed6f-6cda-4dd3-ba35-5d8d4be5579e>

² https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/city-manager/communications-office/cubberley-community-center_map.pdf

³ Cubberley Concept Plan 2019: <https://www.pausd.org/about-us/committees-task-forces/archived-committees/cubberley-master-plan>

⁴ City Council, October 7, 2024; Agenda Item AA1; SR #2409-3500, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=98415&repo=r-704298fc&searchid=e199f724-22ab-472b8ad8-ca162c4dcf8a>

Palo Alto provides an opportunity to develop a new community center and other improvements on a combined 15 acres at the Cubberley site to provide a range of City programs, including health, wellness, and recreational opportunities for residents.

Master Plan Update and Pursuit of a Local Ballot Measure

To advance the master planning effort the City Council took several actions on December 2, 2024⁵ related to the future of the Cubberley site. These actions included approval of a contract with Concordia, LLC, and associated budget actions for development of a revised Master Plan for the Cubberley Community Center site, building on the previous master plan completed in 2019 by Concordia and guided by significant community input. Additionally, the Council approved a Letter of Intent with the Friends of the Palo Alto Recreation Wellness Center for the purpose of fundraising for a recreation wellness center (gymnasium) at the Cubberley site, and a workplan for pursuit of a November 2026 local ballot measure to fund the purchase of land and development of a new community center at the Cubberley site.

Subsequent Council actions included approving a five-year lease with PAUSD⁶ to continue the current use of the property, including playing fields, approval of a professional services agreement with Rincon for CEQA analysis⁷, and approval of professional service agreements with Lew Edwards Group and Fairbank, Maslin, Metz & Associates⁸ for ballot measure strategy advisement and community polling.

Cubberley Ad Hoc Committee

The Council established the Cubberley Ad Hoc Committee (as a non-Brown Act body) to review and advise staff on efforts related to polling and development of a ballot measure that will successfully receive voter support in 2026. Efforts include polling, financial and revenue modeling for the community center, master planning, and community outreach to complete the Master Plan and place a measure on the November 2026 ballot.

The City Council will serve as the governing body for policy direction at key decision points. This includes direction to conduct polling, review of concept designs, direction on

⁵ City Council, December 2, 2024; Agenda Item 18, SR #2410-3634, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=112713&repo=r-704298fc>

⁶ City Council, December 2, 2024; Agenda Item 12; SR #2410-3651, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=112707&repo=r-704298fc>

⁷ City Council, December 16, 2024; Agenda Item 12; SR #2411-3813, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=117742&repo=r-704298fc&searchid=96e9506b-f1bd-485e-a4cb-fc804b5893d1>

⁸ City Council, February 24, 2025; Agenda Item 4; SR #2501-4039, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=143364&repo=r-704298fc&searchid=fef509a6-4d34-4060-bc7a-6ab87db7a0ae>

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operating and financial models, and decisions on what should be placed on the November 2026 ballot.

April 21 City Council Meeting

At the April 21, 2025 City Council meeting⁹, staff presented outcomes from the first community meeting held on March 19, an update on the Cubberley Master Plan Project workplan and sought Council authorization to initiate the first community poll.

First Cubberley Master Plan Community Meeting

The first community meeting for the Cubberley Master Plan Project was held on March 19, 2025, and was attended by over 120 community members and stakeholders. Participants completed two activities in table groups of up to eight people with guided facilitation, focusing on the vision for the community center, programming, and place making. The first meeting goals included a review of the Vision from the City Council session and then using a list from the previous community engagement process, participants were asked to review and confirm desired programming and adjacencies for the future Community Center. The outcomes of the March 19 meeting were presented¹⁰ to the City Council on April 21, 2025.

The first activity focused on a review of the Council Vision statement and participants were asked to expand the Vision statement with additional values and ideas. Community members valued: Multipurpose, adaptable spaces to accommodate diverse uses over time; Gathering hubs for interconnectivity and communication between diverse social, cultural and generational groups; Accessibility for all ages, cultures and abilities to access holistic wellness resources; Integration of green space and sustainability features in experiential and infrastructural planning; and Affordability for local Palo Altans and for tenants who have a community focus. Overall, participants focused on flexibility, inclusivity, sustainability, and long-term community engagement as high-level themes.

The second activity focused on programming and adjacencies of indoor and outdoor spaces. The most selected indoor programs were Theater/Performance Space, Dance Classes, Art Studio, Art Classes, followed by Gym Facility, Flexible Rental Space, and a Café. For outdoor programs, Open Greenspace was the most selected program followed by Playground, Amphitheater, and Pool/Water Area. Compared to 2019, the most mentioned programs then (indoor and outdoor) were Adult Education,

⁹ City Council, April 21, 2025; Agenda Item 11; SR #2503-4310, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=166428&repo=r-704298fc>

¹⁰ Staff Presentation, April 21, 2025; <https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/viewer?id=0&type=7&uid=71ade3d7-a57a-4195-a59b-c410d90832ea>

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Theater/Performance Space, Greenspace, Makerspace, and Senior/Multigenerational Programs.

Feedback on First Community Poll

Polling experts, FM3 presented¹¹ themes for the first community poll designed to test voter opinions on the community center's goals, preferred uses, and willingness to support funding through a tax or bond. The poll themes and questions were developed with input from the Cubberley Ad Hoc Committee and will inform critical upcoming milestones in the project. The Council did not take an action but supported proceeding with the poll.

April 22 Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting

On April 22, 2025¹², staff presented an informational update to the Parks and Recreation Commission, offering a comprehensive overview of the project's overall workplan and timeline. The presentation included a detailed summary of Community Meeting #1, highlighting key themes and priorities that emerged from the community's feedback. Staff also introduced Poll #1, which was launched at the end of April, and encouraged Commissioners to help promote the survey to ensure broad community participation. In addition, the presentation outlined several ways the Commission can remain engaged and support the project, including serving as ambassadors within the community, helping to share information, and providing feedback. The creation of a PRC Cubberley ad-hoc committee was discussed and it was decided that this topic will be further considered during the upcoming workplan revisions scheduled for the coming months.

June 9 City Council Meeting

On June 9, 2025¹³, staff presented to City Council the results of the first community poll, community engagement milestones coming up and updates to the workplan. The focus of the first poll was to survey voter input on the goals and future of the community center and possible support for a tax or bond measure. Staff also shared community engagement. Overall, the poll found broad majority support for improvement at the Cubberley site. Surveyed voters place highest priority on bringing the facility up to modern standards for electrical, plumbing, safety, and accessibility early childhood

¹¹ FM3 Presentation, April 21, 2025;

<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/viewer?id=0&type=7&uid=83ec6422-b6e4-4e83-9ca3-ca746a5971a0>

¹² Staff Presentation, April 22, 2025;

<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/viewer?id=0&type=7&uid=dae0543c-e007-4fc1-9a69-fd08b156ee94>

¹³ City Council, June 9, 2025, Agenda Item 2; SR#2503-4313,

<https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=182790&repo=r-704298fc&searchid=57dac2b5-5c42-4ef0-978a-be940766f395>

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education; affordability and efficient use of taxpayer dollars; and overall repairs for the facility. Lastly, staff shared with the City Council the community revised Vision Statement for the future of the Community Center.

June 12 Second Community Meeting

On June 12, 2025, the City held the second community meeting for the Cubberley Community Center Master Plan, facilitated by Concordia. At the outset of the meeting, Concordia shared a revised Vision Statement based on community input gathered at the March 19 community meeting. The revised Vision Statement is, *A vibrant, beloved, and adaptable destination that promotes learning, connections, joy, and wellbeing where all cultures and generations belong*. Following this, staff provided an overview presentation to orient attendees to the three 3-D concept plans being presented. Each conceptual design includes an A, B, and C variations exploring different configurations of building placement, new construction vs renovation, green space, bike and pedestrian circulation, and parking—both above and below ground.

In the first activity community members were invited as a group to share their feedback on what aspects from all nine designs they liked and wanted “keep” and did not like and wanted to “leave behind”. They indicated aspects they liked with green dot stickers and aspects they did not like with red dot stickers. They were then asked to expand on their choices by writing explanations on the activity sheet provided for the table.

In the second activity, following the group discussion of the three concept designs—The Promenade, The Grid, and The Plaza—participants individually reviewed key design elements using a provided handout. They were asked to evaluate each concept’s primary layout across six categories: arrival & parking, pedestrian circulation, building scale & physical space organization, landscape & greenspace organization, balance of building & greenspace, and being a good neighbor. Each category was rated on a scale from 1 (not successful at all) to 5 (very successful).