

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 Palo Alto provides an opportunity to develop a new community

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>

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

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>