

Measure P—City of Menlo Park: Citizen Initiative to Amend Municipal Code

The Question:

Should the measure, which prohibits the City of Menlo Park from making changes to City-owned downtown parking lot properties, including selling, leasing, or conveying any of the properties, authorizing a new use such as housing development on any of the properties, or modifying, altering, or constructing improvements on any of the properties, if such change would diminish parking availability, access, or convenience, unless the voters pass another ballot measure to approve the change, be adopted?

The Situation:

Under existing law, the City Council determines the uses of City-owned property, including the Parking Plazas. The Measure provides instead that the City is prohibited from taking any of the below Actions without voter approval.

The Proposal:

Measure P states that the City of Menlo Park may not take certain actions that would diminish the availability of, access to, or convenience of parking on the Parking Plazas, without voter approval. Specifically, if the City wishes to take any of the following actions (“Action(s)”), the City must take all legally required steps to approve the Action and then place such Action on the next regularly scheduled election ballot. Such Action will only become effective if approved by a majority of the voters:

- Selling, trading, leasing, donating, disposing of, or otherwise conveying a Parking Plaza or portion thereof
- Designating a Parking Plaza as “surplus land” or “exempt surplus land” under the Surplus Land Act (Government Code section 54220 et seq.)
- Modifying, altering, or constructing improvements on a Parking Plaza that permanently diminish parking
- Changing the use of a Parking Plaza to diminish parking.

Under existing law, the City Council determines the uses of City-owned property, including the Parking Plazas. The Measure provides instead that the City is prohibited from taking any of the Actions without voter approval.

A “yes” vote approves Measure P

A “no” vote rejects Measure P.

A simple majority is required to approve the measure.

Fiscal Effects:

Unknown

Supporters Say:

- Measure P requires voter approval before the City Council can permanently convert downtown parking plazas into high-rise development, rather than letting Council decide alone.
- Developers would get the plazas for \$1/year, but their actual proposals suggest Menlo Park could be on the hook for tens of millions of dollars to replace lost parking (roughly \$50M, per the rebuttal), not the developers.
- There's been insufficient analysis of economic impact, traffic, parking, overcrowded classrooms, or fire safety, and 135 downtown businesses have publicly opposed the plan, fearing they won't survive years of construction plus permanent loss of convenient parking.
- The city's July 2026 housing update reportedly shows housing capacity already exceeds state requirements by 30%, and 1,750+ additional homes are already planned near downtown (former SRI/USGS sites); the better fix is to incentivize more affordability in those existing projects rather than build from scratch on small, congested plazas.
- It only requires a vote for changes that reduce parking availability/convenience—routine improvements are explicitly allowed without a vote—and it applies only to the plazas, not other downtown improvements.

Opponents Say:

- Measure P would block affordable housing in downtown Menlo Park.
- Measure P would hinder Menlo Park's efforts to revitalize downtown like neighboring cities have and block much-needed downtown parking improvements.
- Measure P includes a provision that if anyone sues over it, only the three people who put it on the ballot—not voters or City Council—get to make the final decision about defending it, but taxpayers must pay the legal fees.
- Measure P would forever inhibit the city's ability to plan for downtown's future, blocking modern parking garage upgrades, hindering bike/pedestrian safety improvements, and even delaying simple projects like EV charger installation by up to two years.
- Measure P likely violates state law, risking years of delay, costly appeals, and possibly putting Menlo Park out of compliance with state housing law—which could mean losing local control over development citywide (including exposure to "builder's remedy" projects).

Supporters:

- Alex Beltramo
- Henry L. Riggs (Former Chair, Planning Commission)
- Catherine Carlton (Former Mayor, City of Menlo Park)
- Robert McNamara (Former Mayor, City of Menlo Park)
- Ben Eiref (Former chair, Planning Commission)
- Anthony Draeger (Business Owner)
- Steve Schmidt (Former Mayor, City of Menlo Park)
- John Boyle ((Former Vice-mayor, City of Menlo Park)
- Kristine McColloch (Retired Menlo Park Teacher)
- Oliver Brown (Retired Fire Chief, Past Fire Board President)

Opponents:

- Karen Grove
- Betsy Nash (Mayor, City of Menlo Park)
- Rick Bonilla (Board Chair, Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County)
- The League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County
- Peter Carpenter (Former President and Director, Menlo Park Fire Protection District)
- Matt Burr (Owner, Cafe Zoe and Neighborhood Plaza)
- Margarita Méndez
- Erin Paruszewski
- Jeffrey Liang

Sources:

- <https://smcacre.gov/elections/november-3-2026-statewide-general-election>
- <https://www.menlopark.gov/Government/Departments/City-Managers-Office/City-Clerk/Elections/Nov.-3-2026-General-Election/Measure-P>
- <https://www.savedowntownmenlo.org/>
- <https://www.noonpmenlopark.com/>