

**To:** The City Council of Palo Alto  
**From:** Holly McKenna, Maren Linn, and Renata Duarte  
**Date:** December 5th, 2018  
**RE:** **Proposal for Workshop: The Future of Palo Alto  
January 18th 9am-1pm | Cubberley Recreation Center**

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Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I hope this email finds you well.

We are MBA graduate students at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. For the past semester, we have had the pleasure of exploring the future of Palo Alto for our Strategic Foresight course. Our research was a part of a larger study on the vision of the Bay Area in 2033.

**What will Palo Alto look like through the rapids of change this next decade and beyond?**

While the future is infinite and cannot be predicted, there are methods to extrapolate from current trends and signals to imagine possible futures. Foresight urges us to design experiences that heighten our awareness of how the choices we make in the present move us towards our most preferred future or away from our least desirable future. With a Palo Alto native on our team, this project hit home for us. We studied the history of Palo Alto and interviewed long-time residents, teachers, real estate agents, and technology employees. We also dug into current trends and issues that could affect the future of Palo Alto and used different foresight methodologies to forecast twelve scenarios of Palo Alto in 2033.

From the data we gathered, we identified emerging issues and gained insight into many of the difficult choices the city is facing today. We believe that Palo Alto leadership has great skill in developing strategic plans for Palo Alto and we feel compelled to share our insights with you.

**Please join us on on January 18th from 9am-1pm for a strategic workshop on The Future Palo Alto.**

The workshop will take place in a room at the Cubberley Recreation Center (we will follow up with the exact location details). We are also extending an invitation

to Palo Alto residents, educators, and technology engineers to foster a diverse and rich discussion.

We would be honored if the City Council members could join us for this conversation where we will share what we learned, learn from you and involve the community in a fun, dynamic workshop.

Find our workshop proposal attached to this email for further information. We look forward to hearing from you.

With gratitude,

Holly Mckenna, Maren Linn, Renata Duarte

Proposal for Facilitated Workshop:  
**The Future of Palo Alto**

Cubberley Community Center  
Friday, January 18th, 2019  
9am -1pm

## OVERVIEW

There are many things to love about Palo Alto: nationally-ranked public schools, close proximity to Stanford, great restaurants, a highly educated population, clean streets, tall trees, and more. Palo Alto, the heart of Silicon Valley, is the global leader in technological innovation; the leaders at the forefront of intellectual frontiers. From the global eye, Palo Alto is the city of the future. In many ways it is, and in many ways, it does not yet live up to this reputation. Palo Alto has grown from an orchard to a suburb. Now it is pushing the suburban ethos with increasing numbers of workers arriving from around the world as well as daily commuters from around the Bay Area. What will Palo Alto be in 15 years? We are sensitive to two main underlying currents in Palo Alto that have been in debate for years: the slow growth supporters and the pro-development supporters. We envision a future of Palo Alto that lives up to its identity in a way that embraces both sides of the table.

### **We designed a workshop to bring diverse perspectives to the table to craft a collective, preferred vision of the future of Palo Alto that addresses all sides.**

We propose to include at least one City Council representative (however, all are welcome) three local technology executives, ten local residents (both “slow growth” and “pro-growth”) two educators, one school board official, and two local business owners.

After this workshop, we believe you and your colleagues will leave with:

1) a deeper understanding of what a collectively preferable future in Palo Alto looks like, and 2) a plan for action that will move you toward that future.

## GOALS

**Goal 1** Palo Altans with diverse perspectives have a deeper-than-surface level conversation about the future of Palo Alto

**Goal 2** Participants consider outside influences and inner trends that affect the current situation and likely future of Palo Alto

**Goal 3** The participants envision an array of possible futures for Palo Alto and connect to their preferred vision

**Goal 4** Have FUN

## OUTCOMES

1. Nine scenarios of the future of Palo Alto
  - a. Four “light” side / Four “shadow” side scenarios from the group session
  - b. One from our research that we have chosen to share with you
2. Strategic Vision of a preferred future of Palo Alto
3. A personal action plan to take steps in the present toward the preferred future

## THE EXPERIENCE

**This will not be a 4-hour-powerpoint type of day.** Rather, this workshop is crafted to be a dynamic, fun, thought-provoking experience; it will be most effective (and fun) with open minds and ready engagement. While we will have 20 minute blocks of presentations throughout the workshop, the presentations are meant to fuel discussion and spark creativity. The participants will be broken up into four small-groups (3-5 people) to collectively write a future scenario based on the given parameters. We will present the System Mythology (4 colors) foresight methodology as a frame for writing the scenarios. This tool is used by strategists to think the infinite future possibilities into four color archetypes. Each color has a *logic* that the scenario draws from (Blue - orderly growth, Red - competing growth, Green - organic growth, Purple - magic growth. The four small groups will work to develop a light (preferable) and shadow (not-preferable) scenario of the color archetype they were assigned. All the teams will present back to the group. We will have a live recorder with us to visually capture the elements of the future that are most impactful across the groups. This will help create a tangible synthesis around Palo Alto’s preferable future towards the end of the session. We will take photos during the session to include them in the deliverables we hand back to you as a recap of the experience.

## DELIVERABLES

1. Slide deck with a summary of the session, key insights, and action items that resulted from the meeting
2. All the materials from the live recorder
3. Photographs of the session

## SAMPLE AGENDA

### **PROGRAM BASIS (9:00am - 9:20am)**

Intro

- Who we are
- Agenda
- Ground rules

Warm-up exercise

Strategic Foresight 101

### **CHALLENGE SET UP (9:20am - 10:00am)**

Introducing the problem

Let's talk PA

- Background (past and present)
- Trends (future)
- LIGHT and SHADOW brainstorming session

**:: 10 min break ::**

### **A PREFERABLE FUTURE FOR PA - ITERATION (10:10am - 11:10am)**

Future PA scenario

- Methodology presentation: systems mythology framework
- PA signals
- Individual assignment: worksheet
- TEAM WORK

**:: 10 min break ::**

### **SYNTHESIS (11:20am - 12:40pm)**

- Presentations
- Vote
- Group discussion / Insights
- Actionable steps

### **WRAP UP (12:40pm - 1:00pm)**

Recap

Questions

## [MEET THE TEAM:](#)

### **Holly McKenna**

Originally from Palo Alto, Holly grew up in the pulse of the Bay Area. After studying Biology & Public Health in undergrad, she left to work for organizations in Mexico and Nicaragua for three years. Holly returned to the Bay Area passionate about doing good *well*, and how *good* business can be a force for positive change. Holly brings her heart for social and environmental justice into her business studies at California College of the Arts, where she is currently studying.

### **Renata Duarte**

Renata Duarte is a design researcher and brand strategist with broad experience across many industries. As a Design Researcher at IDEO, Rey blends an expertise on innovative research methods with branding and storytelling. As a Design Strategy MBA student she has been expanding her capabilities around key aspects of business ambiguity. All at the service of informing impactful design.

### **Maren Linn**

Maren has an eclectic history that includes hat making, graphic design and French literature. But at her core is a passion for entrepreneurship, creative problem solving and a strong desire to make the world a better place for as many people as possible.

## SAMPLE INVITATION

*Each person receives one of these AI generated postcards from the future as a thought-provoking teaser.*



What is the future of Palo Alto?

It's up to you to design it.

Please join us for a strategic workshop to find your preferred vision of the future.

January 18th 9am - 4pm

Cubberly Recreation Center