



Summary of Proposed CUP Amendments

September 30, 2026

Executive Summary

- **A new civic home for Palo Alto.** The Palo Alto Museum will bring the city's stories to life in a restored 1932 landmark through exhibitions, education, hands-on experiences, and community gatherings that welcome residents and visitors of all backgrounds and ages..
- **Amendments that fit a working museum.** The 2018 CUP does not accommodate core museum programming such as live performances, school groups, and large community events. The amendments support a full range of programming, occasional special events, and limited venue rentals, strengthening both community reach and financial sustainability. At City staff's encouragement, the allowances anticipate use over the 40-year lease. They are long-term ceilings, not current expectations.
- **Careful safeguards.** Flexibility comes with clear limits: caps on the number and timing of special events and rentals, designated event managers, attendance records, advance notice, noise and cleanup controls, transportation guidance, off-site staff parking, prompt complaint response, and an annual neighbor meeting. Data on attendance, operations, and neighbor feedback will inform a first-year review and any adjustments.
- **Timing matters.** The Museum's opening season begins October 10, 2026 and the Grand Opening ribbon-cutting is April 16, 2027. Partners, speakers, performers, schools, and sponsors need months of lead time. Donors and sponsors look for confidence that programs will go forward. Timely approval is essential for the Museum to commit to its plans and execute fully and successfully on opening to the public.
- **A shared commitment.** The Museum is grateful for its partnership with the City and our shared goal to make this unique landmark both a home for Palo Alto's stories and a dynamic community hub where people of every generation learn, discover, connect, and create. The Museum appreciates its collaboration with City staff and respectfully requests consideration and approval of these proposed CUP amendments.

Background and Introduction

The Palo Alto Museum is a nonprofit civic institution preparing to open to the public for the first time. As a City partner with a 40-year lease in the City-owned Roth Building at 300 Homer Avenue, a 1932 Birge Clark–designed landmark, the Museum seeks amendments to its Conditional Use Permit to support its mission and long-term operations.

That mission is to preserve and share Palo Alto's human stories of change and bring people together – from around the block to around the world – to explore, connect, and create what comes next. Through collections, exhibitions, events, educational programs, and hands-on activities, the Museum will give residents, students, and visitors opportunities to learn, build community, and take part in civic life.

Repeated water intrusion in 2026 requires waterproofing, moisture-control work, and drainage improvements in Heritage Park, which will continue into 2027. In the meantime, while the Museum cannot open its facility fully to the public, it will kick-off its opening season on October 10, 2026, with a Heritage Park event presented in partnership with the City, followed by monthly weekend public events. The season culminates in a Grand Opening ribbon cutting on April 16, 2027, the 133rd anniversary of the founders' filing with the State of California to incorporate Palo Alto as a city, followed by a community festival on April 17–18. Timely approval of CUP amendments is essential for the Museum to plan and execute this season, secure sponsorships, and build the earned revenue that sustains it.

The requested amendments balance four goals. Mission-based programming comes first: exhibitions, education, and public events that bring Palo Alto's stories to life. Community access extends that work by giving residents and local organizations a place to gather, meet, and celebrate. Neighborhood compatibility makes both possible, through thoughtful planning of the scale, timing, and operation of activities to manage potential impacts on neighbors. Financial sustainability will help keep this community resource welcoming and accessible for years to come.

Years of community fundraising, together with the City's support, restored this historic building for public use. Keeping it open, staffed, and full of programs takes steady support. Limited venue rentals will help, and they will always come second: the Museum's galleries, programs, and public hours come first, and rentals are scheduled around them, never the other way around.

City staff encouraged the Museum to request amendments that serve its long-term operations and community benefit, not just its first season, and the Museum welcomes that invitation. Because the Museum has not yet opened, without actual operational data, it is difficult to predict needs, outcomes, and impacts. The proposed

amendments provide room to develop programming and respond to community needs, with actual activity and neighborhood experience informing future review.

The City's partnership has been essential at every stage, from the 40-year lease to support for the building's rehabilitation, the water remediation now underway, and the adjacent site drainage improvements in Heritage Park. Together, the City and the Museum are transforming this historic building for public life, and the Museum is committed to making it a vibrant place where Palo Altans of every generation learn, connect, and are inspired to help create what comes next.

Conditions of Approval

Planning

General [Conditions 1-9 and 11-20, 28, 32 remain unchanged]

10. Café Seating

- A. Café seating beneath the rear colonnade and on the Bryant Street brick patio is permitted in the configuration shown on the approved plans and shall maintain ADA access, building egress, fire access, and pedestrian circulation at all times.
- B. All tables and chairs shall be easily removable and shall remain entirely within the Roth Building lease lines.

Conditional Use Permit

The following conditions are stated in conjunction with the Conditional Use Permit approval for this project application. The proposed use of the Roth Building as a museum with associated uses, including a café and community rooms, is categorized as a “community facility,” which requires the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit pursuant to PAMC Section 18.28.040. This CUP amendment revises conditions of approval to support operation of the Palo Alto Museum. It does not approve a building expansion, authorize organized use of Heritage Park, or modify the City's lease and related agreements with the Museum.

After the first twelve months of regular public operations (April 2020 to April 2027) the Director of Planning will conduct a review. Either the Museum or the Director may propose changes or amendments based on operating data, community needs

and benefits, and neighborhood impacts. Current allowances will continue while the review is underway.

21. Plan Compliance

The use of the Roth Building as a community facility shall be conducted in substantial conformance with the project plans stamped January 12, 2016, project description letter stamped July 8, 2015 and parking plan stamped December 18, 2015 on file with the City of Palo Alto Planning Division, except as modified by these conditions of approval.

22. Hours of Operation

Context:

1. A wide array of activities to serve diverse visitors of all ages—such as docent tours, lectures, educational workshops, hands-on activities, film screenings, school programs, demonstrations, theater and music performances, art shows, community forums—are integral to delivering the Museum’s mission and should be recognized as ordinary Museum programming and operations, subject to Special Event provisions in Condition 23B.

Proposal:

1. Consistent with the Lease Agreement, the Museum will be open to the public a minimum of 20 hours per week. Upon full opening in April 2027, the regular public hours will begin as Thursday to Sunday, 11:00 am–4:00 pm, with extended hours to 8:00 pm on Thursday – for a total of 24 hours per week.
2. The Museum requests Museum and subtenant operating hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, up to six days per week, plus up to two evenings per week until 9:00 pm. This maximum provides room for mission-based programming to develop and grow.
3. The café, its service window, and outdoor seating may operate between 7:00 am and 6:00 pm, up to seven days per week.
4. There is no separate cap on Museum programming during approved hours. Venue rentals during these hours are part of regular operations and follow Condition 23A.
5. Outdoor amplified sound and events extending past 9:00 pm are subject to Condition 29 (Noise and Amplified Sound).

6. The hours, six-day operating schedule, and two-evening weekly limit established by this condition apply to regular Museum operations, including Museum programming that does not qualify as a Special Event under Condition 23B. Venue rentals authorized under Condition 23A and Special Events authorized under Condition 23B may occur outside regular Museum operating hours, on additional evenings, and on days when the Museum is otherwise closed to the public, subject to their respective conditions.

Event Operations Summary

	Regular Museum Operations and Mission-Based Programming	Special Events
	<i>*Note: Standard building capacity and noise limits apply to all events at all times</i>	
General description	Day-to-day public access, visitor engagement, and staff administration	Gatherings of 150 or more event attendees or events past 9:00 pm
Examples	Docent tours, exhibits, workshops, lectures, performances, film screenings	Exhibit opening with 160 attendees, speaker panel event and dessert until 9:30 pm, donor reception until 9:30 pm, community non-profit fair for 200 total attendees over 3 hours
Education groups	Unlimited number of events during 8:00 am–6:00 pm	N/A
Typical hours	Museum and subtenant operating hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, up to six days per week, plus up to two evenings per week until 9:00 pm. Consistent with the Lease Agreement, the Museum will be open to the public a minimum of 20 hours per week. Upon full opening in April 2027, the regular public hours will begin as Thursday to Sunday, 11:00 am–4:00 pm, with extended hours to 8:00 pm on Thursday – for a total of 24 hours per week. Education programs may begin at 8:00 am as needed.	May run to 11:00 pm, subject to late-event limits
Maximum end time	9:00 pm	11:00 pm
Setup & cleanup and load out	Within standard operating hours	Cleanup and load-out completed by midnight

	Regular Museum Operations and Mission-Based Programming	Special Events
Annual cap	No cap on Museum programming; venue rentals up to 100/year (an average of less than twice a week), any day, ending by 9:00 pm (Condition 23A).	48 Special Events/year
Events past 9:00 pm	None	Up to 36/year (with maximum 24 completing clean-up and load out no later than 10:30 and max of 12 completing clean-up and load out no later than 12 midnight)
Live entertainment/amplified sound	Allowed, subject to noise levels in PAMC Chapter 9.10	Allowed, subject to noise levels in PAMC Chapter 9.10
Alcohol	Permitted within lease lines only (ABC license required)	Permitted within lease lines only (ABC license required)
Café Hours	The café, its service window, and outdoor seating may operate between 7:00 am and 6:00 pm, up to seven days per week.	N/A
Food service	Café window/seating within lease lines	Permitted as ancillary use
Bryant St. patio / Colonnade seating	Only within lease lines	Only within lease lines
Neighbor and City Communication		
Prior to Official Public Opening April 2027	The Museum shall mail a one-time notice to properties within 150 feet of the boundaries of Roth Building lease lines. The notice shall state the approved hours, provide the Museum's neighbor contact information, and explain how to join the Museum's ongoing neighbor notification list.	
Public communications for events	Museum events listed on website at paloaltomuseum.org	
Internal log		The Museum shall keep an internal log recording the event, date, hours, location, anticipated and actual attendance, complaints, and corrective actions. Exempt City uses will also be recorded.
Advance notice to neighbors	None	Email notice at least five (5) days before each Special Event to the neighbor notification list

	Regular Museum Operations and Mission-Based Programming	Special Events
Advance notice to City	None	Written notice to the Planning Department at least five (5) days before each Special Event
Neighbor Relations & Communications	Monthly: Opportunity for neighbors to opt in to monthly newsletter with Museum updates and events Annually: Open neighbor meeting covering Museum year in review and upcoming highlights, community involvement and volunteer opportunities, concerns and input	
Complaints	Email contact: neighbors@palloaltomuseum.org . The Museum shall maintain a designated neighbor contact. Concerns raised during an active event shall be directed to the event manager for same-day response. Other complaints shall be acknowledged within one (1) business day and addressed through a resolution or action plan within five (5) business days. If two (2) or more distinct complaints about the same operational issue are received within thirty (30) days, the Museum shall escalate the issue to its leadership and implement an action plan.	

23A. Venue Rental

Context

- The Palo Alto Museum’s collection, exhibitions, events, education, and experiences to serve the public are at the core of delivering on the institutional mission. Every decision about how the building, staff, and other resources are used starts there.
- Rentals as mission, not just margin:
 - Community priority: The Museum is offering a 15% discount for nonprofits, schools, and civic groups to help make the building a shared civic resource.
 - Built-in education: Rental packages offer tours, exhibit access, or short talks on Palo Alto history.
 - New audiences: Community meetings, a luncheon, and offsites bring in people who might never have planned a museum visit.
 - Lasting relationships: A guest's first visit can lead to membership, and a host organization can become a partner, sponsor, or donor.
- Healthy museums rely on a portfolio of revenues, such as a) donations from individuals, foundations, and corporate sponsors, b) government grants and in-kind support, and c) earned income from admissions, memberships, the shop, events, and rentals. Rentals are one vital stream within that mix, supporting both mission-based impact and financial sustainability. They provide revenue that doesn't depend on a donor's year or a grant cycle.

- The Museum and the City have invested in restoring the City-owned Roth Building for public use. Rental income helps sustain that investment by supporting staffing, utilities, and maintenance, keeping admission affordable and school visits free or low-cost, and helping public programs grow.
- Venue rentals are a secondary, limited activity that supports Museum operations. Public access and Museum programming come first, and rentals are scheduled around them. In the inaugural year (April 2027 to April 2028), the galleries will be open 24 hours a week, Thursday through Sunday. In the remaining hours, rentals put this public asset to use when it would otherwise sit empty, with bookings coordinated to respect the neighborhood.
- Venue rentals are an established way for Palo Alto's cultural organizations to support their public missions.

Organization	# of Venue Rental Events/Year*
Palo Alto Art Center	"hundreds"
Gamble Garden	149 events

*Peer rental figures were provided by organization staff in September 2026 and describe reported activity, not permit limits.

- The requested allowance is below current totals at other City-owned cultural sites and comes with the neighborhood safeguards in Condition 23B
- The allowances are ceilings not projections. Because the Museum has not yet opened, we expect to build venue rentals thoughtfully. First-year data will guide review by both the Museum and the Director.

Proposal

1. Palo Alto nonprofits, schools, neighborhood associations, and civic groups shall be offered a 15% discount.
2. Year 1: During the first twelve months of regular public Museum operation, up to 100 venue rentals (less than an average of twice a week) that do not meet the definition of an On-Site Special Event are permitted. Venue rentals meeting that definition count toward the Special Event allowance instead of the 100-rental allowance.
3. Venue rentals that do not meet the definition of an On-Site Special Event may occur on any day of the week, including evenings and days when the Museum is otherwise closed to the public, and shall end by 9:00 pm. A rental that extends past 9:00 pm or has 150 or more event attendees is an On-Site Special Event and is subject to Condition 23B.

4. After twelve months, the Director of Planning will review Venue Rental allowances, considering the first-year data. During the review, either the Museum or the Director may propose changes, and the Director may adjust the allowances based on the findings. The Museum may continue to hold up to 100 venue rentals per year, including while the review is underway, until the Director modifies that limit through this review process.
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23B. Special Events

Context:

1. Special events, defined as those that run past 9 pm or draw 150 or more people, are an occasional but essential part of museum life. They include the moments that bring a community together: the Grand Opening festival, exhibition openings, celebrations, evening gatherings working adults can attend, and fundraising gatherings that sustain the Museum. Because they are infrequent and planned well in advance, they can be managed carefully, and their reach goes well beyond their number.
2. The proposed On-Site Special Event provisions seek to make the building a welcoming community resource, support the Museum's long-term financial sustainability, and respect the surrounding neighborhood. They provide flexibility to meet community needs alongside clear limits, thoughtful event management, and review informed by operating experience and neighbor feedback.
3. The requested flexibility comes with care for our neighbors: a designated event manager at every Special Event, attendance records, advance notice, noise and cleanup controls, transportation guidance, prompt responses to concerns, and an annual open neighbor meeting. These commitments will help the Museum respond to concerns and give the City a record of actual operating experience.

Proposal:

On-Site Special Event

1. Definition: For purposes of these conditions, an "On-Site Special Event" (also referred to as Special Event) means:
 - a. Any event with 150 or more event attendees; **or**
 - b. Any event extending past 9:00 pm

- c. An activity meeting more than one criterion counts as one Special Event. Events extending past 9:00 pm count toward both the overall Special Event allowance and the late-event allowance.
2. First-Year Allowance: All On-site Special Events shall end by 11:00 pm. During the first twelve months of regular public Museum operation, up to forty-eight (48) On-Site Special Events are permitted, including up to 36/year going past 9pm (with maximum of 24 completing clean-up and loading no later than 10:30pm and 12 events completing clean-up and load out no later than 12 midnight).
3. City Use Exemption: City-sponsored events and other City uses reserved pursuant to the Lease or License Agreement do not count toward the Museum's venue rental, Special Event, or late-event allowances, regardless of attendance. These uses shall be recorded in the event log so the CUP review can consider total building activity and neighborhood impacts. This exemption does not expand the City's contractual rights or waive applicable approved hours, occupancy limits, safety requirements, or event-management and notification requirements.
4. Administrative Review: After twelve months of regular public operation, the Director of Planning shall review the Museum's Special Event allowances, considering the first-year data. During the review, either the Museum or the Director may propose changes, and the Director may adjust the allowances based on the findings. The Museum may continue to hold up to 48 Special Events per year, including up to 36 events extending past 9:00 pm and the associated limits on cleanup and load-out, while the review is underway, until the Director modifies that limit through this review process.
5. Community Room: Community Room use is governed by Condition 27 and the Special Event definition, counting rules, and City Use Exemption above.

Event Management

1. Each On-Site Special Event shall have a designated event manager responsible for staffing, security, attendance control, ingress and egress, parking communications, waste management, and complaint response. Staffing and security shall be proportionate to the event.
2. Guests shall be directed to disperse promptly and quietly.

Event Calendar and Noticing

1. Before public opening in April 2027, the Museum shall mail a one-time notice to properties within 150 feet of the boundaries of Roth Building lease lines. The notice shall state the approved hours, provide the Museum's neighbor contact information, and explain how to join the Museum's ongoing neighbor notification list.

2. The Museum shall maintain a public event calendar and an internal event log. The log shall record the event, date, hours, location, attendance, complaints, and corrective actions. Exempt City uses shall also be recorded.
3. The Museum shall provide written notice to the City Planning Department and neighbors registered on the Museum's neighbor notification list at least five (5) days before each On-Site Special Event.

Heritage Park Events

1. This CUP does not authorize Museum use of Heritage Park. Any organized activity beyond the Roth Building lease lines in Heritage Park requires separate approval through the City Community Services Department permit process and shall comply with park hours and permit conditions.
2. Alcohol consumption is prohibited in Heritage Park.

Zero Waste

1. The Museum shall comply with applicable City Zero Waste requirements. Where refuse containers are provided in common areas, meeting rooms, café and food-service areas, staff breakrooms, and Special Events, adjacent recycling, compost, and landfill containers with required color coding and signage shall be provided, except where fewer containers are allowed by City requirements.

Neighbor Contact and Complaint Response

1. The Museum shall maintain a designated neighbor contact. Concerns raised during an active event shall be directed to the event manager for same-day response. Other complaints shall be acknowledged within one (1) business day and addressed through a resolution or action plan within five (5) business days. If two (2) or more distinct complaints about the same operational issue are received within thirty (30) days, the Museum shall escalate the issue to its leadership and implement an action plan.
2. The Museum shall conduct an annual open neighbor meeting.

24. Parking and Transportation Information

Context

1. The Museum is already encouraging walking, biking, and transit through its website and will reinforce that information in onboarding, ticketing, event, and rental materials. (See: <https://paloaltomuseum.org/find-us/>)

Proposal:

1. All employees, volunteers, subtenants, visitors, renters, and event attendees shall be encouraged to use alternate modes of transportation such as transit, bicycling, walking, or carpooling.
 2. Parking and alternative transportation information shall be provided to employees, volunteers, subtenants, visitors, renters, and event attendees through appropriate website, onboarding, ticketing, event, and rental materials. Drivers can find parking in the City Hall garage two blocks away, or use street parking.
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25. Off-Site Parking Arrangement

Context

1. The Museum currently has four full-time staff members. One commutes daily by Caltrain, and the other three each work from home one day a week. The Museum holds an agreement for three staff parking spaces at the 260 Homer Avenue garage and is finalizing an updated agreement for four spaces through the full public opening. As staff and volunteer numbers grow, the Museum will add parking to match, keeping staff vehicles off neighborhood streets.
2. The Museum is 0.4 miles away from the Palo Alto Transit Center, which qualifies as a major transit stop. AB 2097 and Palo Alto's implementing provision, PAMC §18.52.040(a)(1)(C), establish that ordinary off-street vehicle parking is no longer required for qualifying projects near transit. Under these provisions, the Museum is not required to provide leased parking for visitors.
3. Because of the Museum's size of exhibitions and typical event length, most Museum visits are expected to last less than two hours. Programs with larger audiences are anticipated primarily on weekends, when more visitors are available and demand for downtown parking is likely lower.
4. If the City believes a fixed parking requirement remains applicable under an existing agreement or statutory exception, the Museum would appreciate clarification of that basis so the City and the Museum can work together on appropriate conditions.

Proposal

1. Beginning December 1, 2026, the Museum will lease 4 parking spaces at 260 Homer Avenue Garage for employees and volunteers.
2. As the number of staff and volunteers grows to support full operations, the Museum will increase leased spaces as required. We ask that this updated

agreement be executed after the Museum begins operations for regular public hours.

Questions

1. The Museum will serve people of all abilities and backgrounds. Current on-street parking close to the Museum does not provide accessible parking. What are the possibilities for accessible spaces?
 2. The Museum will serve lifelong learners, from school students to seniors. What are the possibilities for a permanent or temporary curbside space for visitors' buses or vans?
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26. Transportation and Parking Monitoring

Proposal

1. Within sixty days after the first twelve months of regular public Museum operation, the Museum shall submit a transportation and parking report to the City's Transportation Division. The report shall summarize reasonably available information on employee, volunteer, subtenant, and visitor travel and parking patterns; use of leased parking; and documented complaints and corrective actions.
 2. The Director of Planning has the discretion to adjust the proposed parking arrangement and may request additional monitoring and reporting when supported by substantiated parking impacts.
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27. Community Room

Context

1. The Community Room is a community asset that, together with other program spaces, supports the Museum's public purpose by providing opportunities for learning, cultural programming, and community gatherings. Activities meeting the definition of a Special Event are subject to the approved limits described in Condition 23B.
2. Although the Museum has not yet opened to the public, it has made the Community Room, Board Room, and first and second floor Rotating Galleries available for City use over the past year. The Mayor, City Manager, and staff from departments ranging from IT to Planning have used these spaces, demonstrating their value as a resource for the City and the community.

Proposal

1. The Community Room (#108) is available for City use, community activities, Museum programming, and rental.
2. Community Room uses occur within the approved operating or On-Site Special Event hours.
3. All events remain subject to approved hours, occupancy limits, and applicable noise requirements.
4. Museum programming in the Community Room is not subject to a separate frequency cap.
5. Community Room rentals count toward the applicable venue rental or Special Event allowance.
6. As provided in the Lease Agreement, the City may reserve and use the Community Room and other Museum spaces for City events and purposes without a use fee, but must cover extra direct costs, such as cleaning or security, beyond general operating expenses. For spaces outside the Community Room, the City must give reasonable advance notice, and the Museum may decline if its own use conflicts and takes priority.
7. The Museum will maintain a reservation record showing the user, date, hours, attendance, and whether the activity counts as an On-Site Special Event or is an exempt City use.

29. Noise and Amplified Sound

Proposal

1. Noise levels emanating from the building shall not exceed the maximum level established in PAMC Chapter 9.10.
2. Live entertainment and amplified sound shall comply with PAMC Chapter 9.10 and other applicable permits.
3. Outdoor amplified sound within the Roth Building lease lines shall end by 9:00 pm.
4. Events extending past 9:00 pm shall occur indoors, and doors and windows shall remain closed when necessary to contain sound.
5. If substantiated noise impacts occur, the Director may require reasonable operating changes or an acoustical analysis at the Museum's expense.
6. Amplified sound in Heritage Park is not authorized by this CUP.

30. Neighborhood Compatibility

Proposal

1. Museum and subtenant operations shall protect nearby residential properties from excessive noise, lighting, and other nuisances.
 2. Museum operations shall not obstruct public access, required egress, or ordinary public use of Heritage Park.
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31. Live Entertainment

Proposal

1. Live entertainment such as theater, dance, and music may be part of Museum programming.
 2. Live entertainment is permitted within the Roth Building and approved outdoor areas within the Roth Building lease lines, subject to the approved hours, On-Site Special Event limits, noise ordinance PAMC Chapter 9.10, and the Conditions above.
 3. Live entertainment or amplified sound in Heritage Park requires separate City approval through the City Community Services Department permit process.
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