When new development or infrastructure changes are in progress, key components such as bike parking, sidewalk widths, etc., that were approved in the plans are sometimes either not implemented, or implemented in a substandard manner. It has been a challenge to fix errors during implementation, even when the city is made aware of those shortfalls. What process improvements would you champion to address these shortcomings?

City Council Candidates:

Stewart Chen:
Have our bike coordinator attend all planning board discussions in its earliest stage of the planning and voice any concerns that we may have.

John Knox White:
This is a problem I have been working on with Bike Walk Alameda for well over a decade. It speaks to a lack of training and ultimately accountability on the part of the City. Often, the issue is that a new employee has started and staff training has not included information on our transportation goals or requirements and therefore they overlook permit requirements that they are unused to seeing in their old jobs. It is beyond disheartening that these issues have to be discovered by residents, reported and sometimes strongly pushed to be changed. This is not responsive and responsible government.

City Planning staff works hard with the residents, businesses and our Boards and Commissions to ensure that project designs and requirements meet the needs of our community. While transportation is one of the biggest issues in town, it is often a second thought when it comes to routine permit checks, on-going city maintenance, etc. And as such, the city misses low-cost, high-return opportunities to reduce congestion and increase safety and security for people who choose to walk and bike.

The City Council hires the City Manager and sets their objectives. In that capacity, I would work tirelessly to reinstitute annual performance reviews and goals and include in that training that is instituted to ensure that staff at all levels understand the goals of our city’s guiding policy documents. Additionally, a metric for success will be a process review for plan and permit checks that identifies changes that will ensure compliance by staff in confirming that before signing off and closing a permit, all required transportation infrastructure and design work is completed as approved. The City Council needs to work with the City Manager and hold them accountable for taking the necessary steps to fix this once and for all

Robert Matz:
Presently, there is an US vs. Them relationship between Council and City Staff. Jennifer Ott, who received a standing ovation at the opening of Site A, recently left to take a position as Hayward’s Deputy City Manager and said of the move “I am incredibly honored to join an organization that is committed to caring, openness, and integrity.” This suggests she does not
believe the City of Alameda cares, or is very open, or deals with City Staff with integrity. I am friends with contractors and people working in the trades, and know from the stories they tell that most often, errors like this happen when there is a communications breakdown, often due to strained relations between the workers and the higher ups. A top down approach is the wrong way to address this; we need to rebuild the relationship between staff and Council; we need teamwork, not . We might consider adding a pull down on Click Fix for these types of issues. Teamwork, not horsewhi

Jim Oddie:
This is an important question given the issues with the “Atlantic gap” of the Cross Alameda Trail. Back in April 2017, staff presented a recommendation to council to approve a plan without a midblock crossing. I made the motion, which passed 3-2, to approve the plan with the mid-block crossing, and without having to wait for additional drawings, to keep the project on track. Sometimes, even when council gives clear direction, staff doesn't always follow through or delays working on things they disagree with. This is why it is critical for the Council to hire a City Manager who understands the role of staff in implementing policy passed by the Council. It’s also critical for Council to exercise our oversight power to ensure staff is actually doing the things that the Council is directing them to do on behalf of our constituents. It’s also critical for citizens, like Bike Walk Alameda, to remain engaged on the projects and issues that are important to them. I have been, and will continue to be, available for Bike Walk Alameda anytime they have concerns or issues they want to raise on any of the work product coming from our city staff.