



## Cat Brooks Oakland Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

*EBHO is a member-driven organization working to preserve, protect, and create affordable housing opportunities for low-income communities in the East Bay by educating, advocating, organizing, and building coalitions.*

**1. Do you believe that housing is a human right? If not, why not? If so, what are you going to do ensure every one of your constituents has a safe, quality place to call home?**

Yes. I absolutely and unequivocally believe that housing is a human right, and will do everything in my power as Mayor to ensure that right is realized by all Oakland residents.

First, I will immediately get those who are sleeping on the streets, off the streets. Unlike the current administration, I truly believe that we are in a state of emergency and need to be acting like it. This means using alternative housing models. For example, some of our public lands could be used to build tiny homes that can be up in two weeks and cost a fraction of what a regular affordable housing unit would cost to build. We could also use city owned buildings for transitional housing and services.

While we work to provide transitional housing, we need to be attracting developers of low-income and affordable housing to the City to create long-term housing solutions. Tiny homes are not forever homes, and with over 6,000 Oakland residents living in our streets, we need to be using all available resources to create and sustain low-income and affordable housing.

**2. EBHO has put forward a proposal for a package of measures to preserve existing rental housing resources and protect tenants from displacement. What would you do to strengthen the condo conversion ordinance, prevent conversion of single room occupancy (SRO) residential hotels, and regulate short-term rentals such as Airbnb and dedicate transient occupancy taxes from short-term rentals to support affordable housing?**

I fully recognize the devastation facing our community from displacement, and will work actively to make sure the full EBHO package is adopted, implemented, and enforced.

I will strengthen the condo conversion ordinance by, among other things, working to close the use of the “conversion rights” loophole that allows “rights” to be bought from other projects that then allow people to eliminate rental housing and dealing with the duplex-fourplex problem.

I will implement a full moratorium on the loss of SRO residential hotels, and work to mobilize city resources to save and preserve as affordable the SROs we currently have, including bringing



back into use some that have closed. I will adopt limits on short-term rentals so that landlords cannot turn apartment buildings into unlicensed hotels, and make sure we preserve our housing.

I will regulate short-term rentals, and will work to dedicate the transient occupancy tax (TOT) revenue from short-term rentals to support affordable housing.

In addition to making sure that all of these needed actions are approved and funded, I would also use my role as Mayor to ensure the administration follows through on action. For example, the Council had previously allocated \$2.2 million for renter assistance and displacement prevention, but the funds weren't issued because the current administration "misplaced" them for a year. This meant that tenants unnecessarily suffered wrongful evictions and excessive rent increases -- and many lost their homes and are still suffering -- because of mismanagement.

As Mayor, I would make sure we fully implement renter assistance and protections, and work together with you and other stakeholders to dramatically improve our ability to prevent displacement and help renters in need.

**3. What do you think are the critical elements of a public land policy for Oakland? Would you prioritize the use of public land for development of affordable housing? How would you ensure that at a minimum the City fully complies with the Surplus Land Act?**

My priority for the use of public land is to immediately house the homeless and develop truly affordable housing.

I fully support the community's requests for a strong public lands policy that ensures public land is used for the public good. This includes quality jobs and local hiring, a transparent community input process, projects that take into account the health impacts and potential benefits to the community, and, urgently, projects that prioritize low-income housing. With private land so expensive, for Oakland to be serious about expanding affordable housing development, we need to use this important asset - our public land -- to make sure our urgent need for affordable housing to be met.

I disagree with recent proposals from the current administration that advocate the sale of public land to private, for-profit developers for controversial (non-housing) projects. Not only do these proposals fail to provide us with affordable housing, they also don't include decent job standards. We must do better. And we must treat our need for more affordable housing with urgency and action.

As Mayor, I would direct that the surplus lands act must be met, and I support the adoption of a policy by Council to formally adopt these public lands rules. I would direct that public lands be offered first to those who would build affordable housing, and that such proposals need to be prioritized. Even if it were disputed as to whether the Surplus Lands Act technically applies to any piece of land or not, I would insist that we follow those standards.



**4. What new sources of funding would you consider to create an ongoing stream of dedicated funding for affordable housing production?**

We will seek to partner at the local, county, and state level to encourage the creation of new streams of funding for affordable housing production. In addition, we will champion the enforcement and collection of impact fees, including a reexamination of our current fee schedule - if we charge an average of \$20,000 per unit in fees and Fremont charges an average of \$80,000, that suggests strongly that we could raise fees significantly. Further, we will ensure that future development comes with community benefit agreements that are directly linked to the production of low-income and affordable housing. It is well past time for developers to be paying their fair share to build in Oakland, and this is one of the primary tools that municipalities like Oakland should use to ensure that these projects benefit the people. Finally, we would explore revenue-generating projects for that public land that is not suitable for affordable housing. There are plenty of innovative ways cities have used public lands to generate income, and Oakland is well situated to explore and take advantage of those innovations to subsidize our housing needs.

**5. In 2016, the City Council reallocated “Boomerang Funds” (the city’s share of property tax increment that used to fund redevelopment) from affordable housing development to homeless services. Measure W would create a vacant property tax to fund homeless services and deal with illegal dumping. If this measure passes, would your budget proposal ensure that the Boomerang Funds are returned to their original purpose of providing permanent housing?**

Yes, I am willing to make this commitment. We need funding to address both the vital need to build more affordable housing and the immediate need to house the homeless. I do support the proposed Vacant Property tax on the November ballot to fund services for the unhoused, and will also work to bring in other resources, as well. As both housing the homeless and providing affordable housing are among my highest priorities as Mayor, I am confident that the return of the Boomerang Funds to their original purpose of providing permanent housing will not negatively impact the services provided to the homeless.

**6. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Oakland, and how would you remove those barriers?**

One of the greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Oakland is political will. The current administration has fallen embarrassingly short of its affordable housing goals, instead favoring high-priced developments. My approach to housing development puts affordable housing first, so naturally that barrier would be gone if I were elected. It will be important to me to work closely with city council to ensure that we are on the same page with respect to housing. As the People of Oakland have stated loudly and clearly that housing is the greatest need, I expect that the current councilmembers will follow their constituents and support my proposed budget and initiatives that ensure housing for all.



- 7. Oakland is in the middle of an unprecedented building boom, with building permits issued for over 7,000 units between 2015 and 2017, and thousands more in the pipeline. This is far more housing that was created under the “10K” Program in the early 2000s. However, 93% of the housing being built is market rate for above moderate-income households, while only 7% is affordable to very low, low and moderate income households. Oakland’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) incorporated in the adopted Housing Element states that 50% of new housing should be for very low, low and moderate income. What will you do to ensure that Oakland’s housing production is at least proportional to the City’s stated needs?**

The current administration is giving priority to high-income housing development, and so Oakland is falling very far behind on our affordable housing development needs. I will immediately act to prioritize affordable housing development. This includes making public lands available for affordable housing development, streamlining permitting, and allowing, where practical, greater height/density and reduced parking (especially on transit corridors) for affordable housing projects. Further, I will take action to make sure available funds for affordable housing, including Measure KK, are distributed in a timely manner. Finally, I will work with the County, the State, and regional partners to allocate more resources to this urgent need.

- 8. How will you work with the county and with MTC/ABAG to provide regional solutions to homelessness and affordable housing?**

As Mayor, I will regularly meet with County and regional leaders directly to strengthen those ties and actively work to implement real solutions for the region. Since the county controls most of the homeless services funding from the State and controls a huge amount of affordable housing development money that was passed by the voters as Measure A1, it is vitally important that we improve city-county coordination to meet these important needs. I will specifically ask for county partnership on expanded homeless services, including allowable RV-sites, our Interfaith Council strategy using congregational property for safe parking and tiny homes, as well as other alternative housing models. I will also use my influence to encourage the inclusion of county-owned properties in our effort to make public lands available for housing, and I will commit to building a strong interpersonal connection with them to help remedy some of the disconnect between city and county actions. To help facilitate this work, I will assign staff to ensure city-county coordination.

In the region, Oakland has long been left behind and suffered from regional decision-making. We have higher asthma and cancer rates which is linked to the concentration of diesel trucks passing through our hardest-hit communities. Our housing crisis is exacerbated as we absorb the unmet housing needs of big corporations in San Francisco and Silicon Valley, which continue to expand commercial development without housing for their workers. The current Mayor has weakened Oakland’s power in the region, both by acting to remove Oakland’s seat on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) Board and by skipping a very large portion of Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) meetings, on which the Mayor of Oakland has a seat. With MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)



## East Bay Housing Organizations

---

in the middle of merging and hundreds of millions of dollars at play, it is vital that the Mayor of Oakland play a strong and positive role in regional decision-making. I will make sure to attend the MTC meetings and will bring forward strategies and proposals to support the East Bay, including fighting for significant funding to be connected to regional housing strategies -- so cities that do provide the housing receive funding, and cities that fail to provide the housing have to fund the impacts they are causing. I will also help advance transit-oriented housing, with programs for our workforce and low-income residents, and fight for transportation solutions that serve hard-hit communities like Oakland and make it easier to take transit, walk and bike. Finally, I will make sure lower-income communities are taken seriously in planning, and will work to advance other cities also making these efforts.

- 9. Large sections of Oakland, particularly in the North and East Oakland flatlands, have been recently designated “Opportunity Zones” where investors are entitled to significant federal tax benefits. How will you ensure that those investments benefit existing residents rather than exacerbate displacement in transitioning neighborhoods? Would you support the City reclaiming a portion of the enhanced value for affordable housing, for example by creating an Opportunity Zone overlay where housing impact fees and jobs/housing linkage fees would be higher than in other areas of the City?**

Yes, I would be pleased to work with you to make sure we make the most we can of the “opportunity zones” program and avoid displacement and other negative side-effects. This should include designating funding for affordable housing, providing anti-displacement and renter assistance programs, and ensuring that projects come with benefit agreements. In the long run, I’d also be happy to work together to lobby the federal government for changes we may want to suggest as we identify any issues with their program. And, in the meantime, we would also use other local Oakland efforts to push for the best projects with the most benefit to the community.

- 10. Do you support Prop 10, and if it passes, what would you do to strengthen Oakland’s rent control?**

I support Proposition 10. I have been and will continue working to get it passed, vocalizing support at events and as I go door to door on the campaign trail. If and when Prop 10 passes, I will do everything in my power to ensure its implementation. I will immediately bring in community, community stakeholders, and experts to develop a progressive rent control policy. We can, and must, strengthen rent control to protect our communities. Displacement hurts both the individuals and families who are displaced, and harms the fabric and vitality of our whole community.

- 11. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program only serves a fraction of the people who qualify. Those who are fortunate enough to receive such assistance often discover that they cannot find landlords willing to accept their vouchers. What would you do to ensure that Section 8 vouchers are accepted throughout the City so that all who receive them can actually use them?**

I would work actively to expand the number of landlords accepting Section 8 through multiple Methods including:

- adopting an Oakland rental tax exemption for property owners who rent through Section 8.
- implementing a requirement to accept Section 8 on public lands projects



## East Bay Housing Organizations

---

- offering funding for property owners to rehab properties on condition of accepting Section 8
- using the power of the Mayor's platform to encourage property owners to accept Section 8
- expanding public outreach and education to property owners to encourage accepting Section 8
- expanding the use of "project-based Section 8" to develop affordable housing that takes Section 8, including through public lands and Measure KK FUNDS

Finally, California has a ban on source of income discrimination but it doesn't cover vouchers. This needs to change. I would support the adoption of a city ordinance to prevent Section 8 voucher discrimination, using models like the law passed in Washington State.

**12. What measures will you support to prevent at risk households from becoming homeless, and what would you do to provide housing for those who are already homeless? Please discuss both short-term and long-term strategies.**

To support at-risk households from becoming homeless, at the state level I support the repeal of Costa Hawkins. I believe that a robust rent control policy can serve as a long-term strategy that provides necessary protection to renters, and I will fight to implement a progressive policy that truly puts renters first. I will also work to close the landlord eviction loopholes and will work to enact a provision that provides low income residents the right to counsel for evictions and foreclosures, similar to Proposition F in San Francisco.

With respect to providing housing for the homeless, one of my first steps as Mayor will be to immediately provide transitional housing for all of the over 6,000 homeless Oakland residents. We will use a variety of alternative housing options after consulting with the community, community stakeholders, and experts. Beyond that, we will move on the utilization of public land to begin restoring low-income and affordable housing to Oaklanders. We also intend to make use community benefit agreements, inclusionary zoning, and other strategies outlined above to ensure that any new development in Oakland benefits the people of Oakland and makes a direct impact on both the short and long-term housing crisis in our City.