



## Pam Harris for District 4 Oakland City Council 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?

***Housing is absolutely a human right and that is something I say everywhere I go and to every person I meet. The crisis we are in is one that's been decades in the making, and now we are seeing the results of a perfect storm. High unemployment rates for African Americans in our city, the rent being "too damn high", NIMBYism, and a long-standing ill will by our elected officials toward our neighbors who are now forced to live under highway overpasses and in parking lots is the crisis of the day. I got into this race because I saw the body of a dead homeless man on my way to work. We must do better.***

***We need to grow the number of units we have in Oakland. I am a strong believer in upzoning. This means increased housing and infrastructure around BART, BRT, and AC Transit lines and in other areas that have traditionally not been high-density housing areas. In my district, that may look different than it does downtown Oakland. It means looking at three or four story buildings replacing questionable motels along MacArthur Blvd. It also means, allowing homeowners to upgrade their properties into multi-family homes.***

***We also must streamline the permitting process and create a standard for what it takes to do business in Oakland. Community Benefit and Project Labor Agreements in our city are currently a piecemeal process. I would like to work with community groups across the city, labor unions, and other stakeholders to create a basic Community Benefit and Project Labor Agreement that must be met to build in the City of Oakland. If a developer wants to expedite, use city land, not include affordable units there would then be additional conversations and benefits that would kick in.***

***But first and foremost, we must first preserve deeply affordable housing by supercharging the efforts to grow community land trusts and housing cooperatives in Oakland and other mechanisms to ensure that currently affordable housing remains affordable into the future. We also need to recognize that housing takes many forms, from temporary to transitional to permanent, from***



***SROs to RVs to single-family homes. We need to preserve and create more housing options across the spectrum. This includes taking a look at what land is owned by the city, county, and state and providing long term leases to non-profit affordable housing developers.***

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 support the recommendations put forth by EBHO. The City should collect a 14% Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) from short-term rentals and set aside a portion of those funds for affordable housing development.***

***One of the powers of city government is the ability to convene. I would like to facilitate advocacy groups like EBHO and your members, property owners, policy experts, and residents to figure out progressive solutions to how we strengthen our condo conversion laws, protect and restore our SRO's, and how we regulate short-term rentals in our city. We also must look at how we approach these challenges regionally, and would use existing relationships to create regional solutions.***

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?

***I am a supporter of a public lands policy here in Oakland. I believe that our public lands must be utilized for public benefit as outlined in Oakland's Roadmap Toward Equity. However, we can't live in a bubble and think we have all the solutions. I believe one of the powers of the City Council is to convene. We must bring together developers, renters, homeless people, labor and many others to recommend to the city a plan that works for all impacted. In addition, we should look to other cities like San Francisco, Seattle, and Pittsburgh (PA) for best practices.***

***Affordable Housing must be the cornerstone of how we use our public lands. We must also invest in mixed-use developments that will help us generate greater access to healthy food, affordable retail space, and healthcare clinics in our city for all of our residents.***

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



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***Our budget is a direct reflection of our values. As a financial services provider for non-profits and community-based organizations, I am intimately familiar with what it means to incorporate values into budgets. We are all fighting for a small piece of the pie. My first priorities will include looking at how we spend our dollars, where they can be better utilized, and where we might find new revenue sources. Our officers are running up large amounts of overtime responding to issues of homelessness and to unemployed youth on corners. If we invested in youth services and social workers instead, we would save money, as well as provide more appropriate responses. Maintenance and preventative measures must be prioritized so we stop kicking the can down the road. We need to recognize the value, not just the cost, of the community services in which our city invests.***

***Oakland is a place of innovation. We must build and leverage relationships with the nonprofit, philanthropic, and for profit communities within our city, region and state to fund solutions to many of the unique problems our city faces. This means investing in staff that can research opportunities, build relationships, and apply for funding opportunities.***

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, what would you do to ensure that the Boomerang Funds are returned to their original purpose of providing permanent housing?

***We have to rebuild trust between local government and our residents. Part of this is transparency and using resources for their intended purpose. While I am hopeful that redevelopment funds will be come back to us under new state leadership, we must be good fiscal stewards here at home. This means working with my council colleagues to ensure that we are using every available dollar to build housing that’s affordable and can help to stave off the massive displacement happening in our city.***

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

***There are enormous challenges to doing business with our municipal government and getting things done in Oakland. From city departments that have been understaffed since layoffs during the great recession, to a lack of a citywide Project Labor Agreement and piecemeal Community Benefit Agreements, there is no standard for what it takes to do business in our city.***

***I would like to work with community groups across the city, housing advocates, labor unions, and other stakeholders to create a basic Community Benefit and Project Labor Agreement that must be met to build in the City of Oakland. If a developer wants to expedite, use city land, or include a lower number of***



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***affordable units there would then be additional conversations and benefits that would kick in. To me, a successful community benefits agreement looks like a transparent agreement where all parts of the community - lifelong residents, renters, workers, environmentalists, and others - get to fairly and transparently take part in the success and growth of Oakland (which has benefitted too few for too long). It is an agreement that doesn't take an expert to understand and one that makes the process more just.***

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?

***There is a myth that developers won't build in our city unless we give them everything they want, including the lowest impact fees in the region and the ability to opt-out of including affordable units. I believe we must look at what our neighbors, who are also experiencing a building boom, are doing and follow their lead. Housing is a human right and we must approach development with that in mind. This means ensuring all developments pay an impact fee that's on par with the rest of the region AND include affordable units that are integrated throughout their development.***

***Additionally, we must upzone to allow for increased density in traditionally non-dense areas like my district. In my district, that may look different than it does downtown Oakland. It means looking at three or four story buildings replacing questionable motels along MacArthur Blvd. Also allowing homeowners to upgrade their properties into multi-family homes.***

8. 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?

***Oakland's Opportunity Zones must be a benefit for the people of Oakland. I am willing to explore all options to ensure that Oaklanders can stay in their homes and that we fight displacement. We should also work with regional partners to ensure, as a region, we are rolling out policies that won't put our cities at odds, but instead reflect our shared values.***



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

***"The rent is too damn high!" This is the rallying cry of the supporters of Prop 10, the ballot initiative that seeks to repeal Costa-Hawkins. I strongly support the initiative and have worked to get my fellow delegates and leaders within the California Democratic Party to cast their vote endorsing the measure. I have and will continue to lift up the initiative as I'm talking to voters and throughout my campaign.***

***I believe we need a regional approach to the housing crisis and this includes rent control reform. I will work with my colleagues in other cities to create a regional reform to rent control so that we can together stem the tide of displacement.***

10. 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?

***City Hall has begun working with the Oakland Housing Authority, Alameda County, and the state to increase the amount and number of Section 8 vouchers offered. We should include in those conversations property owners and affordable housing advocates so we can find increase the number of properties willing to take Section 8 tenants.***

11. 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.

***I got involved in this race because I came across the body of a dead homeless man on our streets. People are dying cold and unsheltered on our streets, and we have not invested in housing and infrastructure in the way that's needed. We must stop this crisis before it begins. All options should be on the table. We should be working with the state to develop rental assistance similar to unemployment assistance for those facing rent increases or un/underemployment.***

***We also need to do more here to support anti-eviction resources for tenants - including robustly investing in and making widely available tenant rights services. Next, we need to stop criminalizing our homeless neighbors. Short-term, this means we need to set up more dedicated camp areas, open public buildings and vacant school sites, allow for faith institutions to open their properties to those living in cars and RV's, and work with our homeless neighbors and allies to ensure everyone has access to safe housing where they are free from harassment***



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*by others. We need to rethink the way we interact with homeless individuals and provide the services they need. I believe our budget should be an expression of our values, and an affirmation of our common humanity. Although the Council has taken steps to provide funding for the homeless and underhoused in our city, we still need to look at how we are spending those dollars. Does it make sense for three officers to respond to a merchant call about a mentally ill homeless person sleeping in a doorway, or can we hire a mental illness/homeless case worker at a lower cost, freeing our officers to do the safety work that's so desperately needed?*

*Long-term, we must ensure we as a city are protecting and rehabbing SRO's, using public lands for public benefit, and above all else focusing on building affordable housing across various AMI's across the city.*