



Oakland City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Loren Taylor, Oakland City Council, District 6

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. Housing is a human right. We should all have access to a safe, secure, habitable, and affordable home with freedom from forced eviction. As with other human rights, it is the government's responsibility to ensure human rights are upheld for its citizens.

In the near term to ensure that all constituents have a safe, quality place to call home, I will work to increasing programs and policies that protect renters from displacement while encouraging vacant units to be placed on the market. This includes broadening renter protections after the passage of Prop 10 to portions of our housing stock currently excluded through Costa Hawkins. In addition investing more resources into legal services for renters facing eviction along with increased education around tenant's rights and available resources.

In the longer term, I look forward to implementing policies that ensure more housing is built at lower levels of affordability, including:

- a. Density bonuses that allow for higher levels of density per parcel in exchange for greater percentages of affordable housing.
 - b. Policies that strengthen inclusion of affordable housing in all areas of the city, prioritizing projects with inclusionary housing over others
 - c. Using community benefit impact fees to help property owners build ADUs on their property to increase their income, offsetting costs of homeownership while, increasing housing stock and ensuring it is offered at affordable rents
 - d. Establishment of a public lands policy that clearly state the prioritized use of public lands to house our "housing insecure" neighbors and/or catalyze the economic engine that will help those neighbors increases the amount they can afford to pay in rent.
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?

To strengthen condo conversion ordinance, I would propose:



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- Minimum benefits for tenants impacted by condo conversion that are substantive enough to support their transition
- Placing a cap on the number of condo conversions allowed per year
- Enhancing the conversion credit system to allow credits to apply to longer-term affordable rentals, instead of higher priced rentals that are only required to be rental units in the short term.
- Better education for tenants surrounding the existing law and support for them in navigating the process

To prevent conversion of SRO hotels, I would propose:

- Attract more hotel developers and approve more hotel development projects to increase the hotel stock in Oakland and give SRO property owner less incentive to convert their properties to hotels.
- Enact an ordinance like San Francisco's that protects existing SROs from conversion except under a limited set of circumstances. As well as preventing the demolition of this type of housing stock in order to prevent homelessness. San Francisco's law imposes criminal penalties and fines for landlords who violate the law.

To regulate short-term rentals, like AirBnB, I would ensure that we treat different types of rentals differently with zoning and permitting requirements.

- Categorize occasional rentals (less than 15% of the year) and private room/ shared room rentals (where the host is present) differently from permanent short-term rentals of the entire home/ apartment (available for rent more than 50% of the year). They all must be registered and report data about rental units so that they can be audited.
- All rentals should be subject to the Transient Occupancy Tax (ToT) while Permanent short term rentals of the whole home/ apartment should be regulated like hotels/ small businesses should require a license, higher tax rate, quality control requirements.
- Limit the number of consecutive nights that a unit can be rented
- Allocate at least 10% of the ToT to the housing trust fund

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?

Yes. We absolutely need a public lands policy and it must ensure equitable development of public assets to include good jobs for local residents, significant affordable housing, strong environmental mitigations and community oversight of the development. I agree with the need to establish specific goals and targets for using public land to foster public benefits to the maximum extent feasible, and think that the Guillen/Kaplan plan comes close

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

To increase funding, I would look to invest money into community land trusts, but do so in a way that multiplies the city's investment by creating partnerships with philanthropy, nonprofits,



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corporations, and private investors who are willing to accept a minimal profit in exchange for the social benefit of increasing affordability and preserving the best aspects of our city. I have spoke to many neighbors and residents who would be willing to invest their resources into a program like this.

I am also supportive of Measure W - the vacant property tax - on this November's ballot so that we encourage use of under-performing property so that it becomes accretive to the economic and housing vitality of our neighborhoods and helps us address the affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

I also propose that we take out a bond that is paid for by future tax revenues assessed on each new development (special assessment) that will pay off the bond. This will allow access to future revenues today and eliminates the complaint that development costs in the initial years are too costly to encourage development projects to proceed.

I also see opportunities for the city to proactively lead on the economic opportunity zones (a majority of the land mass for District 6)... by quickly establishing our own vision for how development occurs within economic opportunity zones, we can more proactively target those businesses and affordable housing developers who align with our vision and values. We can also ensure that we as a community are sharing the (up to 35% ROI) benefits that is available to investors who invest into economic opportunity zones.

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?

I would work with others on the council to ensure that boomerang funds are directed toward building permanently affordable housing, and make sure that the housing projects that are permanently affordable are streamlined so they can be implemented more quickly and with more urgency than other projects given the critical nature of the increasing affordability and the significant gap between where we are and where the strategic plan says we should be.

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

The greatest barriers to affordable housing are

- a. **Costs of housing** – To address the high costs of housing, I would prioritize project approvals based on the use of innovative solutions and methods to create greater affordability. This includes modular buildings like those designed and built by Factory OS, Cooperative housing designs to allow for more community housing and shared



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community spaces that can increase housing stock faster and more affordably. We also need to look at how we reduce the parking requirements for buildings, especially those closer to public transportation hubs... also allowing for the high costs of housing to be reduced. We should also use public lands to reduce costs of building affordable housing

- b. **Limits on housing through licensing and coding** – we need to incentivize greater density through density bonuses and up zoning of parcels, including raising then building heights in targeted areas where we want to stimulate development.
 - c. **Time of housing development** – The delays and unpredictability of timing for delivering on development projects for any housing, especially affordable housing are an issue. We need to streamline and standardize city processes to better support projects, allow them to flow kore smoothly. We must first increase our staff in the planning department to eliminate bottlenecks and inspections that are schedule 6 weeks in advance because of limited resources. We can also better standardize via templating specific construction types/ processes so that review of projects meeting specific parameters is more efficient. Lastly, we should focus on the unpredictability of the development process, because the lack of predictability and unexpected shifts. Changes lead to increased cost and increased frustration.
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?

As an Oakland resident, I am frustrated that current city councilmembers and administration all say that we want and need one thing, yet are so far away from delivering against that goal. In office, I will focus on removing the barriers identified in question 6 above. In addition, I will:

- Finalize the public lands policy that ensures we are using public land for public good – affordable housing and job creation
 - Prioritize approval and investment into development projects that include affordable housing (inclusionary developments). Including the acceleration of affordable housing projects to the front of the line for city permits, approvals, and inspections.
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?



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The biggest opportunity for District 6 is to take advantage of tax incentives that will be available to investors in Economic Opportunity Zones (covering a majority of District 6) as a result of the December 2016 Tax Bill.. There will be significant incentives for investors to invest into District 6, and we as a city must make sure that the financial benefits for doing so translate into the infrastructure and community benefits that we need and deserve in D6.

For District 6 we need a shared vision developed with the community and bought into by key city officials. For too long we have been reactive to proposals that developers bring to us, instead of proactively recruiting developers and businesses who want to help us realize our vision for District 6. If we continue with business as usual in District 6 we will see more gentrification, displacement and erosion of our Oakland Culture.

The expected benefit to investors in economic opportunity zones is estimated at up to 35% ROI compared to investing in areas without economic opportunity zones. As such, I am 100% supportive of ensuring that Oakland shares in the benefits that investors expect to see. I will invite investors and developers to the table who agree to the principle values that we hold to in Oakland around increased housing affordability, building up the economic vitality in East Oakland without displacement, and preservation of Oakland's culture. Those partners who align with us and commit to our principles of development will be a part of our community vision-setting and be at the table to get prioritized access to proposals and approvals.

To take advantage of the economic opportunity zones and get in front of what could be the wild-wild-west of investments and property acquisition, we need to engage and educate property owners so that they don't sell to the first offer, but get them to buy into a shared vision for how Oakland will develop as well. Many Oaklanders and long-time property owners interested in selling would be willing to wait and take an offer that continues to move Oakland forward if they knew about the options.

I have helped organizations develop their vision and aggressively implement it. I look forward to similarly helping our city do the same so that we grow and revitalize our community in a way that looks out for everyone in the process.

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

Yes. I support Prop 10. It will give us in Oakland control of making our own rent control ordinances, instead of being subject to a blanket state law that doesn't consider our unique needs. I believe that we need smart renter protections balanced with the need to encourage property owners to put vacant property on the rental market. I look forward to leading the city of Oakland in creating the right balance.

To strengthen Oakland's rent control, I would include single family residences in our renter protection policies where the property owners do not reside in Oakland or have more than 2



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rental units in Oakland. I would also apply rent control policies to condos when not occupied by the owner. I would also establish rent control exemptions for newly built properties after the first 7-10 years that they are built, after which they become subject to existing rent control policies. Lastly, I will ensure that there is an income limitation on rent control requirements so that those who can afford higher rent aren't occupying an affordable unit when others who can't afford it are being priced out of their homes.

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?

To increase acceptance of section 8 vouchers, I will follow the model of San Francisco to institute policies that prohibit discrimination based on source of income, including Section 8 Vouchers.

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.

It is imperative that we protect renters and homeowners from being displaced by funding stronger renter protection measures, including guaranteed right to counsel (provision of legal representation for tenants under threat of eviction) to ensure they exhaust all options for staying in their home. Demonstration in other cities have shown between 75% and 90% reduction in evictions when access was given to legal representation. Despite the investment into legal services, studies also show a net cost savings to the city due to the reduction in need to provide homeless services.

Beyond merely being able to stay in one's home, we want our neighbors to stay in a home that is well maintained/ updated. To incentivize the improving the condition of Oakland we should pass a policy that waives permit fees for tenant improvements of affordable housing units to encourage improved living conditions and longer-term affordability of affordable units. This would incentivize landlords to act quickly while also improving the living situation for the tenant.

We must focus on not just the policies, but also the implementation of those policies. It is not enough to allocate \$2.2M in funding to protect residents from displacement if we lose track of the money and therefore don't spend it for more than a year – at the same time many residents are being displaced.

I am also in favor of supporting efforts to permanently remove land from the speculative market through community, non-profit, and/or government land trusts.

As our Councilmember, I will fight aggressively to:



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- Bring other local governments from across the Bay Area together to develop solutions for Oakland's homelessness challenges, because homelessness is a regional challenge, not just an isolated city issue.
- Expand the scale and capacity of Transition Centers such as the Henry J. Robinson Center, that demonstrate a history of transitioned nearly 80 percent of residents to alternate housing.
- Subsidize and speed up the approval process for applications to build secondary units attached to primary residences of Oakland property owners.
- Incorporate many rapid housing development options (e.g., tiny homes, RVs, etc.).
- Underwrite often cost-prohibitive move-in expenses for homeless Oaklanders (e.g., last month's rent and security deposit) to help get people off the street and into housing.

I fully support suspending any policy that criminalizes homelessness until we as a city can offer every long-term Oakland resident housing as an alternative to homelessness.