



## Oakland Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Jesse Smith, Mayoral Candidate:

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?

Absolutely. We currently have empty housing than unhoused people. I support the use of Eminent Domain to acquire unused property for the purpose of assuring housing. If people were starving, and people that owned food were purposefully wasting it, that would be murder. No one has a right to keep people homeless. We don't have to follow capitalism over a cliff on this issue.

Eviction of seniors and the disabled must be outlawed.

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?

Oakland is blessed with a dedicated activist community, and their expertise is to be trusted. The efforts of EBHO and other activists must be empowered to thier fullest. We currently have people living in tents... there's no reason to stay the course. This is a crisis, an emergency, and I am yet to hear a proposal to extreme. How far are we from this becoming the type of crisis the military is deployed for?

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?



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We should use the resources we have before building more. That's where the shortage comes from. Building more results in more empty units, higher rents, and more homelessness. I am opposed to high density, poverty housing. High density, poverty housing harms children and inflicts inter-generational trauma, along racial lines.

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

Tax the port.

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?

I propose participatory budgeting. Elected officials should not make budgetary decisions. All residents, including those of us who are homeless, should have a direct say in how the money gets spent.

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

Capitalism is problematic, but the real issue is that our leaders are ideological extremists. We are in the midst of a failed experiment in letting the market govern everything. Nothing the EBHO endorses, should be considered radical. This is why I'm optimistic. All it takes a change of mindset, of assumptions and expectations. We are so fortunate to not have a true shortage of housing. There was no earthquake. We have housing. We just lack political will and a empowered moral directive.

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



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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 only way we can find out is to use the property we have and see what more we need. Anything else is just feeding the same market problem, trying to fill a bucket with a hole in it. This is a design flaw, and we need to fix the design.

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

I wouldn't. I would have to spend a portion of the mayor's salary to empower experts dedicated to this issue. The issue deserves no less than the undivided attention of the best people for the job, and they are not running for office. I do support a stronger, more relevant ABAG, for this and other issues.

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?

No. That's not strong enough. Time and again we see powerful entities are willing to pay whatever fees. That's not a problem for them, and the scale of their impact overruns any mitigation achieved through paltry fees. "Reclaim a portion" of something being given away for free? We can't afford to be so generous.

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



Yes. I would follow the recommendations of EBHO and other advocates, empower the experts.

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?

Section 8 has turned into a racist relocation program. It's outside of the power of the mayor. The mayor can advocate for the obvious legislation, but this would require regulation outside of Oakland.

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.

The best plan is Saied Karamooz's proposal. If elected, I would ask Saied. His plan can be described as follows:

Day one: open up public buildings

Short term: bond measure for emergency housing.

Long term: no interest loans to promote home ownership.