



## Assembly District 15 Candidate Questionnaire

Jovanka Beckles

*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?

**I absolutely believe that housing is a human right. We need a housing system built for people, not for profit. My commitment to these values has been demonstrated by my record as a Richmond City Councilmember for the past eight years. I have attended a number of EBHO events over the years, and I paid attention to what individuals and partner organizations have had to say. I helped win one of the first new rent control laws in California in 30 years, supported a major redevelopment plan, and developed a nationally-leading program to protect homeowners from foreclosure and financial manipulation. If elected to the Assembly, I will be a leading champion for expanded rent control, tenant protections, and affordable social housing development at the state level.**

2. Most people agree that California is experiencing a critical housing crisis with increasing affordability problems for very low, low and even moderate-income households. But there is much disagreement about how best to solve the crisis. Some people argue that the best way to solve the affordability crisis is to just build much more market-rate housing by eliminating local zoning and land use barriers and providing for development “by right” with no local discretionary approvals. Others argue that the affordable housing crisis – especially for those with more limited incomes – can only be addressed with a 3-pronged approach of tenant protection, preservation of existing housing that is currently affordable, and producing new housing with affordability conditions. What is your own approach to solving the state’s housing crisis, and what measures would you prioritize?

**California's housing system presents an affordability crisis for working people, while yielding record profits for a wealthy few speculators and developers. The for-profit housing system is unable to build the secure, affordable housing working people need, because it focuses new development on gaining maximum profit. To build the affordable new housing we need requires a bold state program that supports affordable social housing development through a variety of mechanisms including community land trusts.**

**My Housing for All platform outlines a program to fund hundreds of thousands of units of affordable social housing within ten years in California. We can and must learn from the successes of cities across**



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the world to build a not-for-profit social housing system with beautiful and functional facilities, density near public transportation, and strong mixed-income communities. To develop and win this program, I will work closely with progressive housing leaders like EBHO and tenant organizations across our district.

As we build towards this social housing model, we must urgently fight displacement and protect housing security for working people. Expanded rent control and tenant protections are fundamental tools to prevent displacement. I am a strong supporter of Proposition 10. After its passage, I will actively support local efforts to expand rent control to cover single-family homes, newer construction, and to institute vacancy control. I will also be an advocate for a statewide baseline of reasonable rent control and just-cause tenant protections for all Californians.

Along with these sweeping policy goals, I will join in existing legislative alliances for innovative housing solutions. I support these goals from housing bills introduced in the Assembly this session:

- AB 2065: To advance the use of surplus public land for affordable housing.
- AB 2562: To provide \$500 million in low interest state loan funds to affordable housing and community development projects, to replace federal funding cuts.
- AB 3152: To provide property tax relief for affordable rental housing.
- AB 2162: To fast-track approvals for supportive housing for the homeless.

I also strongly support Propositions 1 and 2, to fund affordable housing and programs for unhoused Californians.

I am under no illusions: it will take a serious, sustained movement to build a housing system for people, not for profit. From my experience with the Richmond Progressive Alliance and on the Richmond City Council, I have a proven record for building a movement that can win progressive housing policies. I will use my position in the Assembly to work with EBHO, and progressive organizations across our district and statewide, to build a popular movement and a legislative coalition for the transformative housing policies working people need.

3. Do you support changes to SB 35 that would lower the affordability threshold for streamlined projects in areas that are already meeting their Housing Element targets for market rate housing?

**Absolutely not. California has a shortage of affordable housing. When a jurisdiction has built -- or in many cases exceeded -- its need for market rate housing, but has not met its RHNA targets for affordable housing, streamlining should only be available for development that would provide the significant proportion of affordable housing that SB 35 currently requires.**

It is my strong belief that upzoning that increases the value of land should be conditioned on the “recapture” of that value in the form of affordable housing and other community benefits. Land value is created by our communities, our public institutions, and the environment. For-profit developers of such valuable land should not be able to privately siphon off all of that value, but instead our



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**communities must recapture that value to support strong public institutions, a healthy environment, and housing for all.**

4. What's your position on State legislation (such as SB 827) that would mandate that cities enact zoning that would permit greater density and height in TOD areas? What conditions (such as affordability, protection of existing affordable housing, and tenant protections) would need to be included for you to support such measures?

**I am critical of the recent Senate Bill 827. I strongly support building more affordable housing near transit corridors. However, as it was written, SB 827 gave major benefits to for-profit developers while restricting communities' ability to shape their own development. SB 827 would have cut the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) impact statement requirements for many new developments, putting local communities at risk. SB 827 would have removed height restrictions and municipal parking capacity requirements for "transit corridor" developments. I believe such changes should be made with local community participation, not under a state mandate designed to benefit for-profit developers. We need to build high-quality, affordable housing near transit, and we can best do so through a not-for-profit, social housing model driven by local community planning.**

**I would support state legislation mandating that cities enact zoning that would permit greater density and height in TOD areas for housing developments that are 100% affordable, and that do not involve demolition of existing housing or displacement of existing residents.**

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

**Working people create California's great wealth. We should use that wealth to provide the good housing we all need.**

landlords to provide housing immediately rather than to hold properties vacant to drive up prices. A progressive property tax and luxury sales tax on homes above \$2 million could help fund affordable housing for all and would re-orient new constructio

**To fund strong public programs for affordable housing, I'll work to eliminate the tax credits, loopholes, and subsidies that benefit for-profit developers, housing speculators, and luxury property owners.**

**Speculative housing transactions should be taxed higher than purchases for homes to be occupied by their owners. We can help limit runaway housing speculation by implementing a housing speculation tax on non-owner-occupied housing. A vacancy tax, already under consideration in many cities, could motivate large n and renovation toward affordable housing.**

**Huge corporations and millionaires increasingly avoid paying to support our society through tax shelters and tax cuts from Washington. On the Richmond City Council, I helped hold Chevron**



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accountable for its fair share in taxes, gaining \$100 million in new revenue for our city. I know how to use legislation and public leverage to prevent evasion of public responsibility even when up against the biggest corporation in town.

We need to close the corporate loophole in Prop. 13 and update assessments for commercial property. To ensure a just economy, I support an expanded state-level corporate profits tax, a millionaires' income tax, and a millionaires' inheritance tax. We need fair, progressive taxation as a foundation for the excellent housing, education, healthcare, and other public programs which can build a California economy with prosperity and security for all.

6. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Assembly District 15, and how would you remove those barriers?

Since the 2008 home foreclosure crisis, corporate landlords and Wall Street speculators have been buying up our neighborhoods like never before. While we pay the costs in our rents and mortgages, these real estate corporations make record profits. Then, these corporations and major landlords put their profits into campaign donations that rig our democratic process against working tenants and homeowners. I am a registered Democrat, but I am deeply upset that a Democratic supermajority in the state legislature and throughout Bay Area municipal government has not delivered the kind of bold policies we need towards secure, affordable housing for all.

My entire political life has been corporate money free, and has demonstrated my proven commitment to building a movement of working people that can effectively take back control of politics. By rallying working people to new levels of political involvement, and building strong partnerships with



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**progressive housing organizations and tenants unions, I will be an elected leader dedicated to overcoming the unfair influence that real estate corporations have seized in our political system.**

7. Will you support another attempt to pass State legislation to exempt Oakland from the Ellis Act with respect to SROs, as is already the case for SF, San Jose, LA and San Diego?

**For-profit evictions are rampant in our state. I support a full repeal of the Ellis Act to ensure that cities can limit landlords' abilities to evict renters or change building purposes through bankruptcy or conversion to condominiums. In the interim, I will support every available legislative step, including Ellis Act exemptions, to allow cities to protect tenants from eviction.**

8. What changes would you support to strengthen the State's Surplus Land Act?

**The Surplus Land Act is a critical state law that prioritizes unneeded public land for affordable housing. As the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's recent analysis shows, 700 acres of surplus public parcels are available in the Bay Area region alone, with a majority of these parcels located near transit. I would support the changes that Assemblymember Ting proposed this year in AB 2065 to strengthen the Act and to bring additional agencies under its requirements. I would also strongly support the use of surplus public land for building social housing, especially where these parcels are situated near transit.**

9. Do you support Proposition 10, which would repeal the Costa-Hawkins Act? Why or why not?

**I strongly support Proposition 10. We need the power at the city and state level to expand rent control to protect tenants in single-family homes and newer buildings, along with the hugely needed step of vacancy control. The Costa-Hawkins Act devastated housing affordability in the East Bay, with market rents skyrocketing by 40% in just one year in Berkeley after its passage. My campaign has coordinated closely with leading Proposition 10 organizers at the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment and the East Bay Democratic Socialists of America, to ensure my field operation is doing as much as we can to win Prop 10 in November.**

10. 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.

**As a mental health professional for Contra Costa County for 18 years, and as a case manager for the homeless before that, I have witnessed firsthand the horrendous human impact of the housing affordability and homelessness crisis.**

**For solutions in the short term, I am a strong advocate of a fully-funded Housing First model to provide secure housing with integrated healthcare and social services. We can fund these needed**



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interventions by prioritizing these programs in the state budget, and by raising taxes on vacant investment properties, housing speculation, and luxury home sales.

We must also immediately address the root causes of homelessness with expanded tenant protections, strong rent control, and protections against financial manipulation of working homeowners.

As another short-term measure, I strongly support systemic changes in police department training and policies, to ensure that our unhoused community members are never subject to unnecessary force, harmful harassment, or loss of their personal possessions. Unhoused people must be connected with social services instead of the carceral system in every situation possible. On the Richmond City Council, I helped lead our efforts to deeply reform our police department and improve social programs, and am very proud of how these efforts have successfully helped reduce both police violence and violent crime overall.

In the long term, the necessary solution to homelessness is a strong publicly-funded social housing system, as laid out in my Housing for All plan. Guided by community needs, social housing should provide special accommodation to help unhoused people gain secure, long-term housing with access to needed services.

Homelessness is systematically driven by factors that extend far beyond the housing system alone. My platform calls to further address the root causes of homelessness with a statewide \$20 minimum wage, just-cause protections against unfair firing, and Medicare for All single-payer system in California. Medical debt is now the leading cause of personal bankruptcy nationally, and a Medicare for All system is a crucial intervention to stop one of the key causes of homelessness, and will provide the healthcare unhoused people need to stabilize their lives. My commitment to win tuition-free, universal childcare and public college education in California will also cut off another source of the crushing debt and family insecurity that drives homelessness, while providing an essential path for housing insecure people to build a better life.