

East Bay Housing Organizations  
Berkeley Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire 2024

*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.*

*The purpose of this questionnaire is to educate and inform communities on each candidate's stance on the housing issues directly impacting them, and does not indicate endorsement. All candidates for Mayor have been invited to complete the questionnaire.*

**Name:** Adena Ishii

**Please give a brief introduction of yourself. (50 word limit)**

*I've been an advocate and leader on local policy issues for over a decade, and I'm offering a fresh approach: finding compromise and bringing people together around common-sense solutions. I was the youngest and first woman of color elected President of our local League of Women Voters.*

**Questions: (200 word limit for each response)**

1. Everybody needs a place to call home, but for too many people, the private market is failing to meet that need. Some advocates argue that the City should focus on removing regulatory restrictions to speed up development of market-rate housing, thereby expanding supply to lower the cost of housing for everyone. Others argue that the market has produced plenty of housing for above-moderate income households, and the City should prioritize housing affordable to those with low incomes. Where do you stand on this, and what actions would you take?

*I believe that Berkeley needs to develop housing at all levels. More supply would bring down the cost of housing, which benefits everyone. However, the city of Berkeley and the region should be focused on the financing and construction of extremely low-income, low-income, and affordable housing since we know that Berkeley has not hit its goals for those categories. We have seen that proper regulation and incentives are necessary to ensure that enough affordable housing is built.*

*I will work to remove obstacles to and incentivize the construction of, missing middle housing (e.g., duplexes, fourplexes, ADUs) to help increase housing, prevent displacement, maintain our supply of family-friendly housing, add smaller units (which promotes diversity across neighborhoods), and help correct historically exclusionary zoning practices. Nowhere is that needed more than in Berkeley, the birthplace of exclusionary zoning.*

*I will also work to thoughtfully revise exclusionary rules around land use, including density and height limitations that prevent additional residents from moving into the neighborhood. I support projects like those over the North Berkeley and Ashby BART stations, the upzoning in Southside, and the apartments throughout our downtown. More than a third of the Ashby BART station development will be affordable housing.*

2. What current sources of affordable housing funding would you increase or expand? Now that the Regional Housing Bond is no longer on this Fall's ballot, what new sources would you support? Please identify both one-time and ongoing funding streams.

*I was instrumental in the passage of Measure O in 2018, which is credited for creating an affordable housing boom in Berkeley. Now that the Regional Housing Bond is no longer on the fall ballot, we need to develop another bond. I will consider another local Bond measure, like Measure O, or if possible, sign onto the next iteration of the regional measure. We will look to leverage our local funding across county, state, and federal sources. Additional funding will be available from Proposition 1, so we need to ensure that we are accessing that funding as well.*

3. What is your position on Proposition 5, and why?

*Yes, I am supportive of Proposition 5. If passed, it will enable local governments to more easily pass bonds for known and needed housing or infrastructure projects in cities like Berkeley. Even though our city and its residents have voted to support our own housing bonds like Measure O, easily hitting our two-thirds threshold- other neighboring cities in the Bay Area and across the state have encountered moneyed opposition and defeat.*

*If Prop 5 successfully passes, it will continue to be important for local governments to have transparency and oversight over the implementation for their bond measures.*

4. In the previous Housing Element cycle (2015-2022), the City of Berkeley produced nearly six units of market-rate housing for every low- or moderate-income unit, producing nearly triple our assigned need for market-rate but only about two-thirds of our affordable housing need. What do you consider to be the greatest barriers to development of affordable housing in Berkeley, and what strategies will you take to remove those barriers to ensure that Berkeley's housing production is more balanced and at least proportional to the City's stated needs?

*The greatest barrier to the development of affordable housing in Berkeley is the lack of funding, and finding appropriate streams of funding for these projects. We acknowledge that*

*building housing is expensive, so it must be a priority in order to make Berkeley more affordable for its residents. Please see the answer to question 2 for a more in depth discussion of where I will work to find more funding for the development of affordable housing.*

5. Berkeley has a number of policies to protect renters from unaffordable rent increases, arbitrary evictions, and other forms of displacement. Which programs do you think are most effective? What changes would you support? Are there new tenant protection and anti-displacement policies that you would pursue? There are two separate tenant protection measures on the Berkeley ballot this Fall. Which do you favor, and why?

*I support strengthening tenant protections to stabilize existing housing for tenants, preserve affordable housing, and prevent displacement. Actions include supporting Just Cause protections and Rent Stabilization protections. I believe that we need to repeal the Ellis Act and Costa Hawkins to allow for more units to be brought under rent control.*

*I support Measure BB and oppose Measure CC because Measure BB will work to create a housing retention program, allow tenants to form associations (that their landlords will be required to meet with), limit the allowable rent increase to 5%, and more increases in tenant rights and protections. These are all actions that will support renters and work to prevent displacement. I oppose Measure CC because it increases the types of units that are exempted from rent control and increases the allowable rent increase, which I believe will hurt renters.*

6. What measures will you support to prevent at-risk households from becoming unhoused, and what would you do to provide housing for those who are already experiencing homelessness? Please discuss both short-term and long-term strategies. What steps should the City take to prevent criminalizing homelessness, particularly after the Grants Pass decision and the Governor's executive order, and focusing instead on solutions for unhoused people?

*I support Measure BB, which seeks to prevent evictions and work to provide a housing retention program. In terms of supporting residents who are currently unhoused, I am focused on building more affordable housing in all Berkeley neighborhoods. Berkeley also needs to make shelters a safer and more welcoming alternative to living on the street. Berkeley shelters should ensure families stay together, provide personal safety and secure storage, offer culturally appropriate services and resources for mental health and rapid rehousing. Berkeley should have shelters that are specifically for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.*

*We need to expand mental health services and make them more accessible by ensuring that Housing First principles continue to inform our policies around addressing homelessness.*

*Applicants should be allowed to enter the program without income, even if they aren't substance free, or if they have a record. I don't support the recent encampment policy passed by the City Council, nor do I support the Grant's Pass decision. We should be treating our unhoused community with respect, and sweeps of encampments are not a compassionate response. We must focus on the solutions and strategies I mentioned above.*

7. Local jurisdictions have a legal obligation to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing in all their housing and community development policies. What does this mean to you? What specific policies would you pursue to address the disparate impacts our housing system has on Berkeley residents of color, particularly Black, Brown and Indigenous people? What should the City do to ensure a more equitable distribution of affordable housing across all parts of the City rather than concentrating it in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color?

*We need to build affordable housing in every Berkeley neighborhood. I support the recent missing middle housing plan that was passed by the City Council. I am interested in looking at the evacuation plan to determine if we can approve missing middle housing in certain sections of the hills because those areas were excluded from the missing middle plan. I also support the right to return policy, which allows for descendants of families whose homes were cleared to make room for BART to return to Berkeley and receive affordable housing.*

8. Berkeley has been considering adoption of a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, which would give tenants the opportunity to purchase their rental units if their buildings are offered for sale. Do you support giving tenants (and nonprofit community organizations) a right of first offer and a right of first refusal? Why or why not? Are there particular elements of the proposed policy that you would want changed, or any exemptions from such an ordinance that you would seek?

*I support the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act because it acts as a vehicle to promote tenant's rights and preserve diversity in our neighborhoods. The creation of affordable housing and accessible homeownership increases home security and neighborhood stabilization, while preventing displacement and gentrification. Further, I support giving tenants a right of first offer and a right of first refusal.*

9. What is your thinking about the current proposal to eliminate single family zoning in Berkeley and allow multiple units on all lots (sometimes called "middle housing")? Do you see this as a vehicle for affordability or other important City goals? Why or why not? Do you have other questions or concerns about the proposed policy?

*I strongly support missing middle housing to help alleviate our housing crisis, make housing more affordable for middle-income families, prevent displacement, and help correct historically exclusionary zoning practices. No where is that needed more than in Berkeley, a city that was built upon exclusionary zoning across racial lines. Studies show that home ownership builds wealth. Families who are historically excluded from purchasing housing benefit from missing middle zoning because this type of zoning allows for more density in building projects, as well as more housing that is affordable for middle-income families. According to a recent presentation by California Community Builders, as of 2019, of California's 39 million people, 35% are middle-income earners. Nearly 60% of all middle-income Californians are people of color, and this income area is where California's diversity is most evident. California needs housing policies that reflect the diversity of the state, as well as acknowledge and address the gap between people's incomes and the money needed to purchase a median-valued home.*

*Missing middle zoning also has the potential to incentivize the maintenance of family-friendly housing, while adding smaller units, which promotes diversity across neighborhoods. These are all incredibly worthy goals, which my campaign wholeheartedly supports.*