

East Bay Housing Organizations Berkeley City Councilmember 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 City Council have been invited to complete the questionnaire.

Name: Andy Katz

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

I'm running for City Council to bring my deep experience over 25 years in public service, including as our EBMUD Director, to prevent wildfires, save local hospital services, and fix our streets. Previously in my career, I've also worked as an affordable housing project manager. More information at andykatz.com

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?

The City of Berkeley must enable zoning to produce housing to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation. If all Bay Area cities do this, then the rising cost of housing will stabilize and hopefully lower. At the same time, the City must raise revenue through tax measures and inclusionary housing policies to fund gap financing to meet the low-income categories of the RHNA. Low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income households are unable to afford housing in Berkeley, so ensuring that we have housing policies and revenue allocations that ensure we are meeting RHNA allocations for these income categories is important.

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 support local and regional bonds secured by property taxes to pay for affordable housing. The third issuance of Measure O (2016) funding will occur in 2025, and remaining funds are anticipated to support affordable housing at Ashby BART. The City should plan for a successor affordable housing bond measure in 2026 or 2028.

I support in lieu / impact fees for an inclusionary housing program, carefully and adaptively managed to support the development new market rate housing and provide inclusionary affordable housing.

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

I support Proposition 5 to enable more affordable housing and infrastructure measures to pass with a 55% majority vote. This threshold has interfered with Berkeley's ability to raise revenue to for our infrastructure and affordable housing needs, and likewise for other cities in the region.

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 is the insufficient gap financing in the city of Berkeley's NOFA / RFPs, funded by Measure O and in lieu fees deposited in the Housing Trust Fund. I will support a successor bond, and a regional bond to meet our regional housing needs.

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?

Berkeley's Rent Stabilization and Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance is effective to prevent above-market rent increases and unjust evictions without government subsidy. I support providing legal assistance for renters facing eviction, and the Tenant Protection Ordinance. I support Measure BB because it enacts modest and reasonable, but meaningful improvements to the Ordinance. I oppose Measure CC because it would unnecessarily and significantly weaken tenant protections.

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?

Berkeley should include in its NOFA / RFP for affordable housing facilities for transitional housing that can provide the community development benefits seen in the Pathways project, but combined with the stability found in Project Homekey. The City should evaluate whether the 30 day residency limit is sufficient to enable navigation and rehabilitation.

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?

The Housing Element looks to develop new multi-family housing on Solano, College Avenue, and North Shattuck. I also support Small Sites acquisition and low-income homebuyer assistance programs to ensure Affirmatively Fair Housing in areas that are not feasible for new multi-family 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 am supportive of the concept to provide another option for permanent affordable housing, or for moderate income renters to use their savings to remain in their homes when their landlord is prepared to sell, but would look to ensure that TOPA does not unduly delay the real estate transfer process, especially for single-family homes and very small buildings. I am also concerned that this form of affordable housing does not produce as many units of affordable housing without the ability to leverage LIHTC funds.

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?

Middle housing is another zoning option to expand housing supply and include affirmatively fair housing. The proposal before the City of Berkeley is expected to produce about 750 units out of 9,000+ in this Housing Element cycle. This program may not significantly affect affordability because it’s a relatively small amount of units among all of the new housing production planned, and will presumably be developed as market rate housing. I support allowing multiple units on all residential lots outside the Fire Zones 2 and 3 because this furthers the important City goal of expanding housing supply, and this may be a path towards more condominium choices. I am concerned that the middle housing re-zoning should not be applied where it is unsafe for fire spread and evacuation risk.