

## 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:**

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

I'm Ben Bartlett, and I have served as Berkeley's District 3 Councilmember since 2016. I've led efforts to reduce homelessness by 45%, approved over 1,000 affordable housing units, and co-authored the Berkeley Green New Deal. I'm committed to creating an equitable, sustainable, and inclusive Berkeley where everyone can thrive.

**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 the private market alone cannot solve Berkeley's housing crisis, especially for low- and moderate-income households. While increasing the overall housing supply is important, we must prioritize affordable housing to ensure our most vulnerable residents have a place to call home. As a City Councilmember, I've led efforts to build over 1,000 affordable housing units and co-authored the Missing Middle legislation, which ended single-family zoning to create more housing options. I also helped secure funding and break ground on the Step Up Housing initiative, which provides supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals.

Moving forward, I would advocate for a balanced approach. We need to streamline regulatory processes to accelerate market-rate and affordable housing development, but the focus must be

on ensuring affordability. This includes leveraging public land for affordable housing projects, strengthening tenant protections, and expanding inclusionary zoning policies. I also support using state and federal funds to subsidize affordable housing and working with nonprofit developers to ensure new developments include affordable units. Berkeley's housing policy should prioritize low-income residents while ensuring that we meet the entire community's needs through a diverse mix of housing options.

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 would advocate for expanding existing affordable housing funding sources, such as Berkeley's Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Measure O, which has already provided critical resources for building affordable housing units. I also support increasing the use of the city's housing impact fees and in-lieu fees from market-rate developments to fund more affordable housing projects. We should leverage state programs, such as California's Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) and the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program, to provide ongoing funding for affordable housing development.

With the Regional Housing Bond no longer on this fall's ballot, I support exploring new, creative funding streams. For one-time funding, I would advocate for a local bond measure or property tax surcharge dedicated to affordable housing. Another potential option could be the issuance of social impact bonds, which attract private investors to fund housing projects in exchange for returns based on the success of those projects.

For ongoing funding, I support policies that generate revenue through progressive taxation, such as increased transfer taxes for high-value property sales or a vacant home tax. These tools could ensure a steady flow of resources to fund affordable housing development and related services in Berkeley.

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

I support Proposition 5 because it lowers the threshold for the California Legislature to impose taxes for environmental, housing, or public safety programs. By reducing the requirement from a two-thirds to a simple majority vote, we can more effectively raise the funds needed to tackle critical housing and climate challenges. This will allow cities like Berkeley to address the housing crisis faster, secure much-needed resources for affordable housing development, and combat

homelessness. Prop 5 ensures that local communities have the flexibility to address these issues directly and responsively.

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?

One of the greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Berkeley is the lack of sufficient and dedicated funding streams. While market-rate projects often attract private investment, affordable housing requires more complex financing from multiple sources, which delays or limits development. Additionally, zoning restrictions and community opposition can slow or block affordable projects.

To address these barriers, I will continue to advocate for expanding affordable housing funding, including the creation of local housing bonds and increasing the city's commitment to housing trust funds. I will push for reforming the permitting process to reduce delays for affordable housing projects and expand zoning reforms like the Missing Middle legislation I co-authored to allow more affordable units in traditionally single-family zones.

I will also work with community groups to build broader support for affordable housing developments, ensuring that our city's housing production meets the needs of all income levels. By prioritizing affordable housing in underutilized areas and creating strong partnerships with nonprofit developers, we can achieve a more balanced housing landscape that aligns with our City's goals and addresses the affordable housing shortfall.

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 has many policies to protect renters from unaffordable rent increases, arbitrary evictions, and other forms of displacement. Strong rent control, eviction protections, and measures like the Ellis Act eviction regulations have been the most effective in maintaining tenant stability. I support expanding these protections by strengthening rent board oversight and ensuring tenants can access legal aid services when facing eviction.

I am also committed to ensuring that affordable housing remains a priority, not only through protection policies but by incentivizing the creation of more affordable housing units. Regarding new policies, I would pursue stronger enforcement of tenant rights, rent control expansion, and affordable housing set-asides in market-rate developments.

Regarding the tenant protection measures on the ballot this Fall, I support Measure BB. After the signature-gathering effort initially fell short, I played a key role in getting it on the ballot. Measure BB provides robust protections against no-fault evictions addresses rent increases, and ensures that tenants—especially those in low-income or vulnerable positions—are safeguarded from displacement. Protecting tenants and keeping Berkeley affordable remains one of my highest priorities.

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 believe in a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness, focusing on prevention and long-term housing solutions. In the short term, I support expanding rental assistance programs, emergency shelter options, and mental health and addiction services. Keeping at-risk households housed through eviction prevention programs and rapid rehousing initiatives is critical to stopping the pipeline into homelessness. Additionally, I advocate for expanding the City’s Specialized Care Unit, which provides mental health intervention without involving law enforcement, ensuring those in crisis receive compassionate support rather than punitive measures.

Long-term strategies include increasing the availability of supportive housing, such as the Step Up Housing initiative, which I co-authored, providing housing paired with wraparound services. I’m also committed to continuing our work on affordable housing projects like the Ashby BART development and the Adeline Corridor, which will provide much-needed housing for low-income families and individuals.

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?

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing means ensuring that housing policies actively combat discrimination and promote equity, especially for historically marginalized communities. For me, it's about dismantling the legacy of redlining and systemic racism that continues to impact Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities in Berkeley.

I've co-authored the Missing Middle legislation, which eliminated single-family zoning, to create more equitable access to housing in historically exclusive neighborhoods. I would continue to prioritize policies that incentivize affordable housing development across the city, ensuring areas like North Berkeley and other high-resource neighborhoods contribute to affordable housing.

Additionally, I support expanding housing vouchers, community land trusts, and inclusionary zoning policies that require affordable units in all new developments. These efforts ensure a more equitable distribution of housing resources, giving residents of color more opportunities to live in areas with greater access to jobs, schools, and public services.

The city must also engage in meaningful community outreach to ensure that housing policies reflect the needs of those most impacted by housing inequities, creating a Berkeley where everyone can thrive regardless of their background.

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?

My key initiative for my next term is affordable and low-income home ownership in Berkeley.

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 co-authored the Missing Middle legislation, which eliminates single-family zoning in Berkeley and allows for the construction of multiple units on all lots. This policy will increase housing supply, promote affordability, and address Berkeley's historic exclusionary zoning practices. By allowing for duplexes, triplexes, and other middle housing options, we can create more diverse

and affordable housing types that cater to a broader range of residents, including young families and lower-income households.

While this policy alone won't solve the affordability crisis, it's crucial for advancing Berkeley's housing goals. Increasing density in areas traditionally limited to single-family homes promotes sustainability by reducing sprawl and fostering walkable, transit-oriented communities. It also helps address racial and economic segregation by opening up high-opportunity neighborhoods to more diverse populations.

My concerns include ensuring that this policy is implemented equitably. We need strong protections to prevent displacement of existing residents, particularly in vulnerable communities. Additionally, we should pair this with programs that incentivize affordable units in these new developments to ensure that middle housing contributes meaningfully to the city's affordability goals. Overall, I see the Missing Middle as vital to creating a more inclusive and sustainable Berkeley.