

## East Bay Housing Organizations Oakland 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.*

**Candidate Name: Cristina Tostado**

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

Cristina Tostado "Tina from the Town" is an Oakland native, first generation Mexican-American. Committed to serving Oakland, stellar record collaborating with Government, business and community. Passionate for community revitalization and economic growth. Oakland Library Commissioner, Reading Partners YP board, Oakland Education Fund Advisory board and mentor for LGO leadership program.

**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 while increasing the supply of market-rate housing is important, it must not come at the expense of affordable options for low-income residents. The private market has indeed produced a significant amount of housing, but it often caters to higher-income households, leaving many families struggling to find affordable homes. To address this issue, I would advocate for a balanced approach that includes implementing policies that encourage developers to include affordable units in their projects, such as density bonuses or streamlined permitting processes. Ensuring that new developments allocate a percentage of units for low-income families, making it a requirement rather than an option. Increasing funding for affordable housing projects through public-private partnerships and leveraging state and federal

resources. Supporting the establishment of community land trusts to keep housing affordable long-term by removing land from speculative markets. By prioritizing both affordable housing and market-rate development, we can create a more equitable housing landscape that meets the needs of all Oakland residents.

1. 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.

To address Oakland's affordable housing crisis, I would prioritize increasing funding from several current sources and advocate for new initiatives. I would advocate for expanding contributions to this fund from local revenue sources, ensuring consistent support for affordable projects. Expanding the use of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), funds can provide essential support for low-income housing initiatives. I would propose reallocating a portion of the hotel tax revenue to fund affordable housing projects, especially as tourism rebounds. Implementing or increasing fees on new commercial developments can generate ongoing revenue dedicated to affordable housing. Encouraging collaboration with private developers to create affordable units in exchange for tax incentives can provide both one-time and ongoing funding. By leveraging these funding streams, we can create a robust financial framework to support affordable housing development in Oakland.

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

Proposition 5 seeks to expand property tax portability for certain homeowners, allowing them to transfer their tax assessments to new homes within California. This measure aims to provide greater flexibility for seniors, the disabled, and disaster victims, making it easier for them to downsize or relocate without facing a significant increase in property taxes. My position on Proposition 5 is supportive, as it addresses the pressing issue of housing mobility for vulnerable populations. By enabling these homeowners to retain their tax benefits, we can help them move to more suitable living situations without the financial burden of higher taxes. This can also alleviate some of the pressure on the housing market by freeing up larger homes for families and new buyers. However, it is essential to pair this measure with policies that ensure the availability of affordable housing for all income levels. While Proposition 5 can enhance mobility for specific groups, we must also address the broader housing crisis in Oakland and ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing options.

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

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The greatest barriers to the development of affordable housing in Oakland are complex zoning laws and lengthy permitting processes often delay affordable housing projects, making them less attractive to developers. The increasing price of land makes it challenging for developers to create affordable units without significant subsidies. Insufficient public funding and resources for affordable housing projects hinder development efforts. To address these barriers, I would implement simplifying the approval process for affordable housing projects. It can reduce delays and costs for developers, making it easier to get projects off the ground. Expanding inclusionary zoning policies to require a higher percentage of affordable units in new developments, paired with density bonuses for developers, can help balance housing production. Also, Identifying and leveraging city-owned land for affordable housing development can lower costs and increase supply. I would advocate for more state and federal funding, as well as local tax revenue allocation, to support affordable housing initiatives. By removing these barriers, we can create a more equitable housing landscape that meets the diverse needs of Oakland's residents.

1. Oakland 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?

Oakland has

implemented several policies to protect renters, and I believe Rent Control Ordinance are particularly effective. This policy limits annual rent increases, providing stability for tenants and helping to keep housing affordable for low- and moderate-income families. Requiring landlords to provide a legitimate reason for evictions helps prevent arbitrary displacement and protects vulnerable tenants. Rental Assistance Programs help provide financial support to tenants facing hardship, helping them avoid eviction and remain in their homes. While these programs are vital, there are areas for improvement and new policies to consider like enhancing the enforcement of existing tenant protections. I support making mediation between tenants and landlords mandatory. Both parties should participate in sessions with trained staff mediators to facilitate constructive dialogue and develop mutually agreeable solutions before any eviction proceedings. It

can ensure that landlords comply with the rules and that tenants know their rights. Tenant Education Programs can implement outreach and education initiatives to inform tenants about their rights can empower them to navigate housing challenges more effectively. Exploring options to expand rent control protections to more units, including those built after the current cutoff, could provide additional security for renters.

1. 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 to focus instead on solutions for unhoused people?

Expanding rental assistance programs can help tenants facing financial hardship stay in their homes. This includes direct financial support and emergency funds for utility bills. Increasing access to legal aid and mediation services can help tenants navigate disputes with landlords, thereby preventing evictions. Implementing rapid rehousing initiatives that provide temporary financial assistance and case management can quickly transition families from homelessness to stable households. Long term strategies by prioritizing the construction of affordable housing units through public-private partnerships, inclusionary zoning, and utilizing city-owned land can address the root causes. Expanding supportive housing that integrates affordable units with services for mental health and substance use can help. Creating job training and employment opportunities for unhoused individuals can empower them to achieve economic stability. The City should adopt a policy that explicitly prioritizes housing-first approaches over criminalization. Ensure that resources are allocated to supportive services rather than enforcement. Establishing outreach teams trained in trauma-informed care can engage with unhoused individuals. Partnering with local non-profits and service providers can enhance the effectiveness of outreach efforts and ensure a holistic approach. Focusing on prevention and supportive solutions, can work towards a future where everyone has access to safe, stable housing without criminalizing their circumstances.

1. 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 Oakland 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?

Oakland, this commitment is crucial in addressing historical injustices and disparities faced by Black, Brown, and Indigenous residents. By revising zoning laws to allow for more affordable housing development in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. This includes reducing restrictions on multi-family units and mixed-income developments. Strengthen inclusionary zoning requirements to ensure that a higher percentage of affordable units is included in new developments across all neighborhoods, not just in low-income areas. Support the establishment of community land trusts to empower communities of color in housing decisions and maintain long-term affordability. Create programs specifically designed to assist low-income households of color, such as down payment assistance or low-interest loans for homeownership. Work with neighboring jurisdictions to develop a regional approach to affordable housing that distributes units equitably across the Bay Area, preventing concentration in certain neighborhoods. I will ensure that affordable housing developments are accompanied by investments in public services, schools, and transportation in all neighborhoods to improve quality of life. By involving communities of color in the planning process to ensure that their needs and preferences are prioritized, fostering trust and collaboration. By pursuing these policies, we can create a more equitable housing landscape in Oakland that not only addresses current disparities but also fosters long-term community stability and inclusivity.

1. Oakland 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 provisions or exemptions that you would seek?

I support the adoption of a TOPA that grants tenants and nonprofit community organizations the right of first offer and right of first refusal. It can empower tenants, giving them a greater stake in their housing stability and community, also addressing the risk of displacement in a rapidly changing real estate market. It helps stabilize communities and fosters long-term residency, reducing turnover and displacement. Allowing nonprofit organizations to participate in the purchase process enables community-led solutions to housing challenges, ensuring that developments meet the needs of local residents. By giving tenants a chance to buy can prevent properties from being sold to developers who may convert them into market-rate units, preserving affordable housing. We should require landlords to notify tenants of any intent to sell, along with a sufficient timeline for tenants to organize and secure financing. Provisions for access to funding or grants for tenants or nonprofit organizations to assist in purchasing process. Consider exemptions for small, family-owned properties or cases where a sale would significantly impact the owner's financial situation, while ensuring

protections are still in place for tenants. By implementing a TOPA, we can enhance tenant protections and contribute to a more equitable housing market in Oakland.

1. In December 2018, the City Council adopted a Land Disposition Policy to prioritize the use of surplus public land for affordable housing. Staff was directed to bring back an implementing ordinance within 6 months, but that hasn't happened. What will you do to ensure that a Public Land Ordinance is drafted, enacted and implemented consistent with the adopted policy? What do you think are the most critical elements of a public land policy for Oakland? What role should the community play in the disposition and use of public land?

I would prioritize timely action by collaborating closely with city staff and leadership. This includes setting clear timelines and accountability measures to prevent further delays, along with establishing a system for regular public updates and community engagement sessions to maintain transparency. Engaging with affordable housing advocates, community organizations, and developers gathering input and building consensus on the ordinance. The most critical elements of a public land policy for Oakland should include prioritizing surplus public land for affordable housing, particularly for low- and moderate-income residents. Implementing community benefit agreements would ensure developers commit to benefiting the local community through initiatives like local hiring and maintaining an affordable units percentage. Equitable development standards should also be established to promote projects that enhance equity, sustainability, and community health. The community must play a significant role in the decision-making process regarding public land use. Through participatory processes that include public forums and advisory committees, allowing residents to voice their needs and preferences. Creating ongoing feedback mechanisms will ensure that community concerns shape the development process, fostering continuous engagement throughout the project lifecycle. By adopting these strategies, we can develop a robust Public Land Ordinance that supports affordable housing and equitable development in Oakland.

1. For large projects such the Coliseum area, what community benefits should the City seek and at what levels? Would you require inclusion of affordable housing, and if so, what percentage should be affordable and what income levels should be targeted? Who should pay for that development?

The City should prioritize several community benefits to ensure that developments serve the needs of Oakland residents. A key requirement should be the inclusion of affordable housing, with at least 30% of units designated as affordable. This should target a mix of income levels, focusing on very low-income (40%), low-income (30%), and moderate-income (30%) households to provide diverse options for those in need. Implementing

local hiring initiatives will ensure that residents benefit from job opportunities created by the project, promoting economic growth within the community. The City should also seek contributions to enhance public spaces, parks, and transportation infrastructure in the surrounding area, improving the overall quality of life. Supporting local small businesses through grants or low-interest loans will help ensure they can thrive amid new development. The cost of developing affordable housing and providing community benefits should primarily be by the developers, who must include these elements in their project plans. The City could further explore funding through public-private partnerships, state and federal grants, and Measure U. By implementing these community benefits, we can create a balanced development that meets the needs of current residents while promoting long-term growth and sustainability in Oakland.