

East Bay Housing Organizations
Alameda County District 5 Board of Supervisor
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 the District 5 Board of Supervisors have been invited to complete the questionnaire.

Name: John Bauters

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

I'm John Bauters, a current Emeryville City Councilmember and former mayor, with more than a decade of experience working in housing and homeless services. I've led successful affordable housing initiatives and will fight for equitable, safe housing for all Alameda County residents, protecting renters, and accelerating affordable housing production.

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 County 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 County should prioritize housing affordable to those with low incomes. Where do you stand on this, and what actions would you take?

While expanding the overall housing supply is important, market forces have disproportionately produced housing for high-income households, neglecting the needs of lower-income families. As Supervisor, I will prioritize affordable housing production and streamline the approval process for developments that serve low- and middle-income residents.

In Emeryville, I led initiatives that significantly boosted affordable housing construction, including a \$50 million affordable housing bond, helping produce hundreds of new homes for low- and moderate-income families. We have successfully reduced homelessness by 79% in the city while prioritizing affordable housing development. I will bring this same focus to the county, advocating for policies that foster inclusive, mixed-income developments and balance market-rate construction with affordable housing production. I support future affordable housing bond initiatives that will remove the backlog of partially-financed projects awaiting full funding, and prioritizing deeply affordable homes to meet underserved population needs.

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 increasing funding through housing bonds, like the one I championed in Emeryville, our 2018 Measure C, as well as Alameda County's previously approved Measure A1 Affordable Housing Bond. With the regional housing bond off the ballot, the County needs to take the lead in providing financing for affordable housing production. I believe that with proper anti-displacement protections in place, Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts can be a tool for generating new, local affordable housing. Additionally, I would advocate for state and federal partnerships to access one-time funds through tax credits or grant programs, while pushing for long-term solutions like an affordable housing trust fund.

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

I strongly support Proposition 5 because it allows communities to approve bonds for affordable housing and public infrastructure with a 55% vote, streamlining the process for urgently needed investments. This measure will not only empower local governments to raise funds for affordable housing initiatives and public works that benefit low- and middle-income Californians, but is more democratic and ensures that the will of the people is protected on an issue as important as housing affordability. Too many affordable housing initiatives are withdrawn or fail because of supermajority requirements that allow vocal minorities of people opposed to new, affordable housing. We should allow reasonable majorities to democratically self-determine the future of housing for their communities.

4. In the previous Housing Element cycle (2015-2022), the County did not meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goal for most income categories, and especially underproduced for the needs of very low-income residents. What do you consider to be the greatest barriers to the development of affordable housing in the County, and what strategies will you take to remove those barriers to ensure that the County's housing production is more balanced and at least proportional to the County's stated needs?

The biggest barriers to affordable housing in Alameda County are high construction costs, regulatory hurdles, and insufficient funding. To overcome these, I will work to cut through bureaucratic red tape, streamline permitting, and advocate for regulatory changes that incentivize and prioritize affordable housing in all parts of the county.

I will push for inclusionary zoning policies and create incentives for developers to build below-market-rate units as part of market rate projects. Partnering with local governments, non-profits, and developers, I will ensure a more balanced and equitable production of affordable housing, including work to ensure that housing is produced in all communities and that access to community amenities is universal. My goal is to make sure the county meets or exceeds its RHNA targets, especially for very low-income residents.

5. What measures do you support to protect renters from unfair rent increases, evictions, and other displacement pressures? What tenant protection measures, beyond those provided by the State's AB 1482 protections, would you support for the unincorporated areas of the county? How broadly would these apply, and what exemptions would you support?

The protections in AB 1482 offer a baseline for tenant protections and supports. I support additional relocation assistance, right-to-return policies for housing taken off the market for temporary or renovation purposes, just-cause eviction policies that protect renter stability, and the strengthening of tenant protections in unincorporated areas. As a former eviction defense attorney, I understand the importance of access to resources and representation in eviction proceedings, and will work to ensure we provide programs and resources to help address landlord-tenant conflicts.

These protections should apply broadly, especially in communities where tenants are most at risk of displacement. Examples of where potential exemptions may be

necessary include owner-occupied properties, but we need policies that provide safeguards against large rent increases and unjust evictions.

6. What practices and policies do you support to provide housing for those who are currently experiencing homelessness? In light of the recent US Supreme Court decision in *Grant's Pass*, do you believe the County should be investing in the criminalization of homelessness and removal of un-housed individuals from public spaces, or do you believe the County should be investing in other solutions for our unhoused community members?

Criminalizing homelessness is not a solution. The County should invest in creating permanent supportive housing with wraparound services for mental health and substance use treatment. I've spent years working with homeless populations, and I know firsthand that addressing root causes—such as housing insecurity, mental health, and addiction—is the most effective way to reduce homelessness over the long-term.

After the Supreme Court's decision in *Grant's Pass*, we need to focus on compassionate solutions, not a return to the criminalization of homelessness. We need to expand shelter options, co-locate services, and invest in long-term housing programs that bring stability and dignity to those experiencing homelessness. I've dedicated the vast majority of my career to bridging access to care and shelter for those who are unhoused, and am eager to bring best practices and solutions to Alameda County on these issues.

7. In 2020, voters approved Measure W, which will raise money to address homelessness. Still, many questions about how to use this money remain. What programs to address homelessness would you prioritize? How will you ensure that members of the public and directly impacted people have input in the use of the funds?

As someone who helped reduce homelessness in Emeryville by 79% since 2019, I know firsthand how critical targeted investments are. Measure W funds should be prioritized for permanent supportive housing, mental health services, and addiction treatment programs. These approaches have proven successful in Emeryville, where we are developing a network of services that support our most vulnerable residents, including a 90-unit permanent supportive housing project for extremely low-income residents,

prioritizing people who are homeless for housing. We must prioritize services that address high-need, high-barrier populations

I will ensure that Measure W funds are allocated with community input, particularly from those directly impacted by homelessness and their service providers. As a long-time advocate and service provider for the homeless myself, I understand that government officials are often prone to making decisions that don't reflect best practices or solve gaps in the services system. I will work closely with advisors and partners in the services community, as well as those experiencing homelessness directly, to prioritize appropriations that meet the needs of those Measure W is designed to serve.

8. 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 Alameda County residents of color, particularly Black, Brown, and Indigenous people? What should the County do to ensure a more equitable distribution of affordable housing across all parts of the County rather than concentrating it in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color?

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing means ensuring that all residents, regardless of race or income, have access to safe, affordable housing and vibrant communities. It also means the government being an active, engaged stakeholder in delivering just and equitable communities that provide for historically challenged community populations. As Supervisor, I will push for policies that address historical inequities, including increasing affordable housing in affluent areas to avoid concentration in low-income neighborhoods.

I'll promote mixed-income housing development, prioritize housing resources for communities of color, and push for equitable distribution of public services like schools and parks. Fair housing also means strengthening anti-discrimination enforcement and ensuring that zoning and land-use decisions do not perpetuate segregation.

As previously mentioned, we need to prioritize place-keeping for BIPOC communities that are at risk of displacement with the loss of housing affordability. At the same time, there are exclusionary communities that have successfully blocked efforts to build new affordable housing in other parts of the county that would create more

equitable communities. I believe we should prioritize discretionary funding for communities that invest in affordable housing to ensure our investments align with our values to fulfill our vision of a more just society.

9. Supervisors hold the responsibility of overseeing the spending of billions in funds, in taxes, bond measures, and other sources. How will you ensure that you are connected and accountable to diverse constituencies in the County, particularly the housing needs, of all community members?

To ensure I stay connected and accountable, I will establish regular community meetings and maintain open lines of communication with diverse housing advocates, tenants, and developers. I'll prioritize transparency and ensure that all voices—especially those from underrepresented groups—are heard in policy-making decisions. I do this today by holding regular town halls around my community, where I remain accessible and responsive to the issues facing my constituents and can help bring solutions.

By fostering partnerships with nonprofits, community organizations, and local governments, I'll ensure that housing strategies are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all Alameda County residents. I will also leverage technology to improve public engagement and create avenues for feedback on housing policies and spending. I've worked as a direct services, nonprofit professional for more than twenty years, working with faith and community based organizations to ensure marginalized voices are elevated and supported in the future of their communities.