

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: John "Chip" Moore

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

I am an entrepreneur and full-time student in UC Berkeley's Masters of Public Affairs Program. I serve as the Chair of the Police Accountability Board and I am on the Planning Commission.

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?

Simple economics dictates that the more supply there is the more that the cost will go down. The City and State should both focus on easing some regulatory restrictions to speed up the development of all housing, not just market-rate. Neither side is necessarily wrong, but they aren't right, either. Like most matters of public policy, there are varying shades of gray that cloud the issue. Public policy as an extension of The fact is that California has been in deficit building since the Great Recession.

I believe that the city has a responsibility to provide housing for all of its constituents; not just those who can afford to purchase. We need a real mix of low income,

affordable, and market rate homes, condos, and apartments. One of the first things I would do is to create a private-public relationship that would allow for funding of a Community Land Trust to help purchase vacant properties, turn them into multi-family dwellings and then sell them back to the community while retaining ownership of the land itself. This method allows individuals to own a home, accrue wealth that they can use to purchase their next home or leave to their children. It solves the biggest problem with deed restricted affordable homes, allowing families to accrue equity while still keeping the home affordable into the future.

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.

The current standard is to attach some sort of real estate transfer tax to multi-million dollar properties that has some portion of it dedicated to affordable housing. This would be the most equitable but not necessarily the most stable. Rather than having a volatile transfer tax that is at the whim of the market, I would consider tax breaks for developments that have a 40%-plus of affordable units. Unfortunately, business being what it is, the end game has to pencil out for the developers or low-income and affordable housing will never get built. I also want to stay away from large buildings that are exclusively low-income. It reeks of failed policies of the 1950, 60s, and 70's that pushed African-Americans into small geographic areas that we are still fighting to get out of.

Similar to education, we know that a proper mix of low income, affordable, and market rate housing will lift everybody. It's incumbent on the city, state, and federal governments to provide incentives to developers and land owners to keep these units and homes affordable into the future. So, there needs to be a mix between a real estate transfer tax and tax credits and other incentives to developers to provide real affordable housing.

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

I support proposition 5. Counties and cities need an injection of affordable housing money that this statewide bond brings. Additionally, lowering the bond threshold to 55% is important for cities that need to be able to pass bond measures for critical infrastructure needs. The 67% supermajority requirement is no longer feasible in today's fractured society. It's also a remnant of Proposition 13 which has completely eviscerated money that the public needs to provide basic health and safety to constituencies.

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?

First, I would end the practice of developers being able to pay an affordable housing nexus fee rather than actually being forced to build affordable housing. Also, given the costs of building material and labor in today's market, it may be difficult for developments with significant portions of affordable and low-income housing to pencil out. With certain exceptions (like nonprofits similar to and including SAHA) we won't get developments without allowing a developer to make money. As such, we need to provide tax breaks and other incentives to developers who are willing to build quality affordable homes.

Also, by creating a Community Land Trust, we have the ability to acquire vacant properties. With the city's embrace of the so-called missing middle, we have an opportunity to provide affordable housing to just the missing. A CLT would have the ability to purchase dilapidated homes and turn them into multi-unit properties that it could then keep affordable while allowing for individuals to accrue equity and pass along generational wealth in a win-win for Berkeley and residents.

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 some of the strongest renter's protections in the world. If anything is failing, it is the enforcement. One area that I would particularly focus on are slum lords that allow tenants to live in derelict buildings without services and fully functioning kitchens and bathrooms. This shouldn't continue to happen. Housing is more than just a roof over one's head.

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 strongly believe in housing first. Unfortunately we need hundred of more beds than we have access to. I will support any and all measures to support individuals and families from becoming unhoused. Let's take a look at non-section 8 rental subsidies. Let's take a look at emergency grants like we had throughout COVID. Let's take a look at how we're going to build an economic engine that drives everybody and not just the few. These policies are not developed and implemented in a vacuum. We can't continue to silo issues and pretend that they don't unintended consequences and other after affects.

Poverty shouldn't be criminalized any more today than it should have been when Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol in the 1840's.

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?

First and foremost, force developers to build mixed housing stock and not pay a fee to avoid building actual affordable housing. Rather than accepting the narrative that a developer can't make money on a specific project, have an independent forensic accountant come through and look at the numbers to see if they hold up under scrutiny. Far too often, building departments and planning commissions don't look beyond the numbers given.

As Berkeley lurches towards the so-called "missing middle" we should make a requirement that any single unit that it converted into a multi-unit residential unit should have at least one affordable unit.

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?

Yes. This aligns perfectly with my plan to create a CLT. CLT's help to keep units and homes affordable while allowing owners to accrue equity.

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?

Yes, we need to eliminate single-family zoning in Berkeley. As an early adopter of single family zoning, Berkeley has a reckoning coming with individuals who have lost out on previous racist policies that marginalized BIPOC people in general, and African Americans in particular. If nothing else, the symbolism behind eliminating single family zoning cannot be understated.

That being said, without an ordinance addressing affordable housing once a new unit gets constructed, it will simply be more of the same. There isn't really a missing middle housing issue. There won't be enough boost to housing stock to make a significant difference in affordability without the city taking the next step.