

**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: Nikki Fortunato Bas

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

As Oakland City Council President, I have championed affordable housing, tenant protections, and holistic community safety. A lifelong organizer, I'm running for Alameda County Supervisor to bring my progressive values and leadership to ensure our communities thrive through housing justice, healthcare, and a fair, transparent government for all.

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?

Housing is a human right, and I believe public investment in affordable housing is essential to addressing the crisis we face. The private market has focused heavily on above-moderate-income housing, leaving low-income and working families without the homes we need. As a County Supervisor, I would advocate for policies that prioritize affordable housing development for low- and very low-income households.

In Oakland, I authored Measure U, a \$350 million affordable housing bond, launched the Acquisition and Conversion to Affordable Housing Fund for preservation of affordable housing with land trusts and co-ops, and championed protections for tenants to prevent displacement. I also support social housing initiatives that create permanently affordable housing owned by the public or nonprofits. Partnering with state and local leaders, including Assemblymember Alex Lee and Councilmember Carroll Fife, I will push for more innovative housing solutions like social housing to meet the needs of Alameda County residents.

Additionally, I will advocate for policies that ensure affordable housing is built in areas with access to good schools, jobs, and transportation, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to thrive, regardless of income. We must build an inclusive housing strategy that serves the diverse needs of our county's residents.

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.

As the author of Oakland's \$350 million affordable housing bond, Measure U, I understand the importance of securing long-term funding for affordable housing. While it's disappointing that the Regional Housing Bond is no longer on the Fall ballot, I will explore alternative funding sources as a County Supervisor. This includes advocating for another countywide housing bond similar to Measure A1, which provided critical funding for affordable housing.

Additionally, I serve on the Executive Board of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and will continue working with the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) to explore future regional housing bonds. These funding streams are essential to addressing the housing crisis across Alameda County and beyond.

To ensure ongoing funding, I will also advocate for public-private partnerships that leverage federal, state, and local resources. Expanding tax credits for affordable housing developments, utilizing state and federal grants, and exploring dedicated revenue streams such as Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts and a future East Bay Public Bank could help generate the resources we need to build more affordable housing and address homelessness in the long term.

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

I am a strong supporter of Proposition 5 because it provides a much-needed tool to address the affordable housing crisis in Alameda County. By lowering the voter threshold for passing

housing measures from two-thirds to 55%, Prop 5 makes it more feasible to raise and borrow funds for affordable housing projects.

In my work on the Oakland City Council, I've seen firsthand how challenging it can be to pass critical funding measures when they require a two-thirds majority. Prop 5 would make it easier for local governments to secure the resources needed to build affordable housing and provide vital services to our community.

Prop 5 is an important step in addressing our housing crisis, but it's not a silver bullet. We must also advocate for policies that prioritize affordable housing construction, preservation and tenant protections. Together with Prop 5, these measures will ensure that we have the funding and political will to create the housing we need and prevent displacement in our communities. I will work hard to ensure that Alameda County takes full advantage of Prop 5 to build a more equitable housing future.

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 greatest barriers to affordable housing development in Alameda County are the lack of funding, regulatory delays, and opposition from those who do not want affordable housing in their neighborhoods. I will work to remove these barriers through policy change, funding strategies, and community engagement.

Oakland is streamlining its review process to conform with state legislation and will implement its updated Housing Element. As a County Supervisor, I will work to ensure similar streamlining, particularly for the unincorporated areas where the BOS has planning jurisdiction and as the County updates its Housing Element.

We must expand public funding for affordable housing through regional/county bonds, state and federal grants, public-private partnerships and newer solutions such as Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts and a future East Bay Public Bank.

I will advocate for policies that prevent NIMBYism from blocking affordable housing projects. It's crucial that we educate the public about the importance of affordable housing and build support for projects in all parts of the county, especially in higher-income neighborhoods where access to jobs, schools, and transportation is better.

We must ensure that housing production is balanced by prioritizing low- and very low-income housing to meet the needs of our most vulnerable 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?

As a longtime advocate for tenant rights, I've championed some of the strongest tenant protection laws in California, including Oakland's COVID eviction moratorium and just-cause eviction protections. As County Supervisor, I will continue fighting for tenant protections, particularly in unincorporated areas where renters often lack the same protections as those in cities like Oakland.

I support expanding just-cause eviction laws and rent control across Alameda County to prevent displacement and keep families in their homes. It's unacceptable that many renters are being forced out of their communities due to skyrocketing rents and unfair evictions. I will work to ensure that tenant protections are applied uniformly throughout the county.

I will also advocate for increased funding for legal aid services, so tenants can defend themselves against wrongful evictions and housing discrimination. Often, tenants do not have the resources to fight back against landlords with more power, and the county has a responsibility to level the playing field.

I support Prop. 33, the Justice for Renters Act repealing the Costa-Hawkins Act, and authored an Oakland resolution to put the City's support on the public record.

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?

The County should invest in a Housing First approach in collaboration with our cities and other partners, focusing on providing permanent supportive housing for unhoused residents, rather than criminalizing homelessness. Criminalization only exacerbates the problem and wastes valuable resources that could be used to house people and provide services to keep people successfully housed.

As Supervisor, once legal challenges are resolved, I will advocate for Measure W funds to be used to create permanent supportive housing and expand mental health and substance abuse services. I will also work to improve the County's Coordinated Entry Program, ensuring that unhoused residents have access to the services they need to move off the streets and into stable housing.

I believe in working closely with impacted communities to ensure that their voices are heard in the decision-making process. We need more community engagement, transparency and accountability to ensure that funds are spent in ways that address the root causes of homelessness and meet the needs of those most affected. By investing in housing, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment, we can make meaningful progress in reducing homelessness in Alameda County.

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?

There should be community engagement to develop the spending plan. I also believe the County should have an equity framework to inform its expenditure plan so that priorities are tied to achieving greater equity and reducing racial disparities in homelessness.

The County's Coordinated Entry Program must do better to support case management and ensure unhoused residents have access to services and a path to shelter and permanent housing. It could better support street level outreach to provide assessments, relationship building and offer mental health, substance abuse and other services. And, it can partner with cities to coordinate and integrate their services as well as pair operating funds for supportive housing with cities' construction and acquisition funds. I have worked with County electeds/aides and County staff to address homelessness and know firsthand that stronger partnership with our cities is critical to address this crisis.

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 taking proactive steps to dismantle the systemic barriers that have historically excluded communities of color, particularly Black, Brown, and Indigenous people, from accessing affordable housing. As a County Supervisor, I will advocate for policies that prioritize equitable access to housing for all residents, regardless of race or income.

We must ensure that affordable housing is built in higher-income, opportunity-rich areas, rather than concentrating it in low-income neighborhoods that have been historically marginalized. This means reforming zoning laws, increasing funding for affordable housing in high-opportunity areas, and ensuring that housing developments are distributed equitably across the county.

I will also push for policies that address the root causes of housing inequity, such as discriminatory lending practices and exclusionary zoning. By working with community organizations, housing advocates, and government agencies, we can create a more equitable housing system that ensures all Alameda County residents have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

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?

Throughout my career, I have practiced collaborative governance, believing that the most effective solutions come from working directly with the community. As County Supervisor, I will continue this approach, ensuring that all voices are heard, especially those from historically marginalized communities.

I will hold regular town halls and community meetings to keep constituents informed and involved in decision-making processes. I also believe in co-governance, where community organizations, labor unions, and grassroots coalitions have a seat at the table alongside elected officials. This approach ensures that policies reflect the needs of the people and that there is transparency and accountability in how county funds are spent.

I am committed to building a government that is truly responsive to the needs of all residents and will work to ensure that Alameda County's housing policies reflect our shared values of equity, justice, and community.