

## 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:**

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

**Noel Gallo:** Current District 5 City Councilmember and previous OUSD Board Director, committed to a clean, safe, vibrant Oakland for families to have equitable access to affordable housing, great schools, thriving businesses, jobs and community services in all neighborhoods. My philosophy is that “Actions speaks louder than words.” Please visit: [www.noelgalloforoakland.com](http://www.noelgalloforoakland.com).

**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?

The City of Oakland must strengthen its cooperation and alignment with Alameda County, State of California and the federal government to identify and leverage funding resources while working with the affordable housing and private development community to address the housing affordability crisis faced by low, very low, extremely low-income families and residents and address the needs of our homeless individuals and families. I align with the following Urban Institute statement:

“Increasing the supply of housing—and particularly affordable housing—is vital to advancing housing justice because it will help reduce costs and alleviate the strain on households with low incomes and households of color. Research has found that increasing access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty. Families living in affordable housing enjoy greater financial security and are able to spend five times as much on health care and other essential needs as families with similar incomes who are severely housing cost burdened. Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable and available to residents of all incomes can promote racial equity and social and economic justice.”

In Oakland District 5, I have worked closely with the Unity Council, Native American Health Center, EBALDC, SAHA, Bridge Housing, to expedite and fund resources for housing. Overall, I have facilitated over 2,000 units of housing that have been developed or are in the pipeline by affordable housing developers and private investors. I have also supported affordable housing developments across the city of Oakland by voting in favor of capital funding awards, approved

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 have supported and will continue to support policies that provide financing for loans to affordable housing developments. As of August 2024, I supported the allocation of funds from Measure U Housing Bond and other non-bond funds in the amount of \$113,400,039 to fund new construction of multifamily rental housing projects, Home key and rapid response homeless developments.

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

I support Proposition 5. Lowering the required threshold to 55% for any borrowing to fund affordable local housing construction, down payment assistance programs and a variety of public infrastructure projects, is needed in Oakland and the East Bay to address the housing crisis.

4. 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?

The City of Oakland's funding for affordable housing production is limited. The August 2024 City Council action to streamline the HCDD's NOFA/RFP process to meet State funding deadlines and support the creation, preservation of the supply of affordable housing. If proposition 5 is approved, additional financing resources will be available. In my opinion, equally important to the production of new housing developments or infill development, is the rehabilitation of existing affordable housing to ensure that Oakland families and children are living in safe homes. Funding has been a limitation. I am interested in exploring if our workforce development programs, combined with some of the City's housing funds, and the City's recent Lead Hazard Abatement Program funding can help create more opportunities for Oakland's rehabilitation program to create safe housing especially in Fruitvale and East Oakland neighborhoods, where overcrowding, unsafe conditions, lack of funds for upkeep, housing cost burden can be addressed.

5. 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?

I recommend that we engage in discussions with private and affordable housing owners to look at market conditions, economic considerations and creative ways to address renter issues. I would like to participate to be better informed of the tenant protection and anti-displacement policies and property owner considerations.

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 to focus instead on solutions for unhoused people?

Oakland, like other cities, is experiencing a Homelessness crisis that has grown by 24% between 2019 to 2022 and then again by 9% between 2022 to 2024 per City studies. The City of Oakland must prioritize its support of affordable housing,

implement consistently its Homeless Encampment Management policies, fully fund its MARCO Program, close encampments that have been found to be crime issues as identified by OPD, moving individuals to shelters while permanent housing is located.

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 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?

The Federal and State of California Affirmatively Further Fair Housing requirements are very important; jurisdictions must be accountable to residents that they are actively working to eliminate housing discrimination, promote fair housing choice, and foster inclusive communities. Coupled with efforts to increase economic equity through job creation, workforce development and education support, the City can always do a better job to support homeownership opportunities to Black, Brown and Indigenous residents. Given that sometimes these residents do need community services, often located in certain areas of Oakland, I believe that the city should have a more wholistic approach to its fair housing programs, using its own Equity Plan to target resources – meaning making East, Central and West Oakland neighborhoods stronger in public safety, transportation access, education, jobs, neighborhood amenities, and housing assistance can help make these neighborhoods more attractive. Affordable housing development contributes to the economic development of an area when coupled with other existing and new community services. I believe this, given the examples of District 5 - Fruitvale Transit Village Transit Oriented Development (TOD), the Native American Health Center, the redevelopment of the St. Joseph's Center for seniors and families.

8. 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 am supportive of the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act to provide tenants and non-profit organizations the right of first offer because it would provide a pathway to home ownership and long-term neighborhood stability. The act centers tenant empowerment by prioritizing current tenants and extending transaction timelines, giving tenants a meaningful chance to purchase. Based on the experiences of other cities, I would look to learn more about the purchase & sale timelines, interest of affordable housing organizations to participate, fund tenant and owner education program, look for ways to couple homeownership assistance and financing support to tenants in a position to purchase and the city should work to address the concerns of the seller. I would look for ways to make the TOPA timeline shorter and ensures beneficial benefits.

9. 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 am concerned that this Public Land Ordinance has not been presented to the City Council. I will submit a request to the Council Rules Committee for a timely report to the CED Committee prepared by the City Administrator on actions taken and the proposed ordinance for review. I believe critical elements of a public land use policy are affordable housing development

10. 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 Purchase & Sale Agreement for the Coliseum property sale authorized the City Administrator to negotiate additional terms, such as a more detailed payment schedule, restrictions on transfers of the Property by AASEG, closing conditions, and standard terms such as indemnification. The Ordinance also requires that the Property be sold subject to several deed restrictions that ensure any future development of the Property provides needed affordable housing and key community benefits.

The affordable housing requirement is codified in a permanent deed restriction requiring at least twenty-five percent (25%) of any residential units built on the Property in the future be designated as affordable for households earning up to 60 percent (60%) of Area Median Income ("AMI"), with at least ten percent (10%) being made available to households earning up to thirty percent (30%) of AMI. This will help provide supportive housing units. Additionally, the Purchase & Sale Agreement has other deed restrictions that require community benefits, including labor agreements; local and small business contracting goals; workforce training and local employment provisions; living wage; public open space and parks; sustainable and green development standards; transportation infrastructure and transportation demand management programs including transit affordability; anti-displacement and housing preservation policies.

Led by Mayor Thao and her team, the City of Oakland agreed to a sale price of \$105m to AASEG, to assist in the cost of these community benefits while the Oakland As' have agreed to a \$125m transaction. Given the deal structure, I propose that the new owners are responsible for the affordable housing development and if any cost is to be borne by the City it should be for homeownership funding.