

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:

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

I am a Berkeley native, attorney (non practicing), teacher at Berkeley High School, and Zoning Commissioner. I've served on the zoning board for 11 years and have served as Chair and Vice chair for two years each. On ZAB, I have approved over 10,000 units of housing for Berkeley. My priorities are more housing, better and more sensible bike infrastructure, and improved relations between the school district and city government.

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 don't agree with either stance. We want to create more housing, but with equity being one of the primary goals of this endeavor, we have to have some government interventions to mandate that some of the housing is affordable, and that the housing is built without human

exploitation. I am more or less happy with the current balance we've struck between encouraging market rate housing and requiring affordability and encouraging good labor practices.

One change I would like to investigate is scaling affordability requirements to proximity to the University. My understanding is that housing farther from UC Berkeley doesn't command as high rents as the rest. If this is the case, then the affordability requirements shouldn't be the same. We want to make sure projects far from UC also have a good chance of penciling out. I don't know if I support this change yet but I would like to see it studied.

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.

Upzoning certain areas of the city to encourage more dense housing projects would increase the amount of inclusionary units being built, and I support doing this. I am also a huge supporter of missing middle housing. I understand that since most of the projects this would usher in would be just a few units, we wouldn't get much in the way of below market rate units, but I do consider the smaller and simpler housing units that missing middle is designed to encourage to be affordable in a different way. We need all of the above to overcome the housing crisis.

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

Yes yes yes yes on Prop 5. Floating bonds is one of the best ways to bring large amounts of affordable housing. Berkeley already achieved this at the higher threshold with Measure P a few years ago, but it's hard to do and other cities may not have as much support for affordable housing in their populations as Berkeley does.

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?

The cost to build affordable housing is extremely high and meeting the targets laid out in the housing element is a much greater lift than the market rate goals. I think it's inevitable that the ratio of market housing to affordable housing will be very high, and we should focus on the more challenging goal only when we think about how much housing we need. The best thing to do is continue to upzone areas of the city that haven't yet been, which will encourage even more market rate housing which will likely contain inclusionary housing, hopefully helping us come closer to our affordable housing goals.

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?

I favor the measure put on the ballot by the Rent Board. I am strongly in favor of renter protections, philosophically. Housing is a human right, and so whenever a person in our community has the potential to lose housing, we must make sure they have maximum access to due process and support, while still making sure that being a landlord is financially feasible, so investment in rental housing will continue.

To this point, believe that the rent board measure does a nice job of strengthening some key tenant protections. I would not have supported it had the golden duplex exemption not been inserted, because I believe that was too much of a deterrent to rental property ownership.

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?

It's essential that the city provide rental assistance opportunities and effective representation for at-risk tenants in negotiations with landlords if they are having trouble paying rent. For people experiencing homelessness, we must offer housing, ideally stable and - if needed - supportive housing to anyone who needs it.

I am extremely wary of the idea of criminalization of homelessness, and think any sort of law enforcement should be applied only as a last resort after adequate services have been offered, ideally with many attempts. If that has been the case, and an individual or group's living situation is causing a threat to public health and safety, only then would I find some sort of citation or forced removal to be an option. Even if it does get that far, everyone involved MUST be treated with human dignity throughout the process.

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?

I am strongly in favor of upzoning higher resourced areas of Berkeley such as Solano Ave, North Shattuck (both located in District 5) and College Ave. The fact that these areas have not been targeted for dense development despite their high walkability and access to transit has been a continuation of the inequitable housing development

patterns that have been present in Berkeley since its founding. It has to stop.

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?

I do not support TOPA as it currently stands. The goal is laudable, and I think that helping renters become owners is a great way to address history wealth inequality that has been the driver of so much inequity in our society for so long. However, I feel that such a strong interference in the free market exchange of real estate would have too large a chilling effect on the market that it may actually hinder development, which would be a loss for everyone in the community.

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?

I am extremely in favor of missing middle housing reform, and believe that, in conjunction with increased dense development, it is the best and most effective approach to increasing our housing supply and addressing the affordability crisis. It is also another important way to address the inequitable development patterns that have persisted throughout our history.

The only concern that I have is adding too much density in the fire zone. I’m aware that putting restrictions on development in the hills, which happen to contain some of the most high-resourced neighborhoods in our area, is extremely counter to the goal of equitable development. I have thought about this a great deal, and have consulted with Berkeley firefighters and others who helped me understand the

nature of wildfire risk and have become convinced that the public safety hazard is too large to ignore. I will await the results of the evacuation study before stating what my specific views are, but I do have this concern.