

East Bay Housing Organizations Oakland Candidate Questionnaire 2025

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: Barbara Lee

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

Barbara Lee has spent her life fighting for justice and opportunity, bringing results to Oakland. From her days as a single mother attending Mills and UC Berkeley to representing Oakland in the State Legislature and Congress for nearly three decades, Barbara's always been rooted in the needs of our community.

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?

Too many people are getting priced out of Oakland. The lack of housing affordable for working families and our future generations affects Oakland's ability to recruit and retain teachers, police officers, and firefighters and affects our community's character. Rapid rehousing is key to keeping people off the street.

As Mayor, I will accelerate housing production for all income levels, tackle the affordability crisis, and increase smart housing density to meet targets while fostering vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. I will be a pro-housing Mayor, so anyone with a dream of owning a home in

Oakland can make that dream a reality. My administration will supercharge the production and approval of affordable housing, with the goal of building 10,000 units of affordable housing by 2030. At the same time, we must strike the right balance by maintaining tenant protections and protecting our diverse community character by helping to keep people in their existing neighborhoods and fighting gentrification.

2. What current local/City sources of affordable housing funding would you increase or expand? What new sources would you support? Please identify both one-time and ongoing funding streams.

Work with the Alameda Board of County Supervisors to champion an Alameda County housing bond for voter approval. Modeled after the highly successful Measure A1, Measure A2 would create an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate Oakland's trajectory to build more affordable units. This should be a "broad tent" measure that supports both private and nonprofit housing development to address a wide range of resident and workforce affordability.

Leverage my federal relationships to pass key pending bipartisan legislation, including the Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act (S.1257/H.R. 3776) which would provide additional housing vouchers for low-income families with young children and offer them more choices for where they live, including access to neighborhoods with high-performing schools, strong job prospects, and other resources. Expansion of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit would expand tax incentives to construct or rehab affordable rental housing for low and moderate-income tenants.

We must be strategic about generating new revenue while ensuring fiscal responsibility. Additional potential funding sources include:

- **Vacancy Tax:** Expanding enforcement on vacant properties to fund housing and services.
- **Impact Fees:** Ensuring large developments contribute to affordable housing and public infrastructure.

3. 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?

We must **streamline permitting to stimulate more housing production**. My administration will work to ensure the City's permitting technology systems and staffing plans are efficient and aligned with our goal to expedite all affordable housing permits. I will empower a Permit Ombudsman to immediately improve the customer service experience for those seeking to build more affordable housing, which will reduce costs and accelerate production.

4. Oakland has a number of ordinances to protect renters from unaffordable rent increases, arbitrary evictions, and other forms of displacement included in the Rent Adjustment Program (RAP). Are there any additions or modifications that you would make to any of these ordinances? How would you strengthen or improve the administration and enforcement of RAP?

I have always been a champion for tenants' rights and believe that rent control is a critical tool in preventing displacement and keeping Oakland affordable for working families. For nearly three decades, I've led the fight for affordable housing and tenant protections. In Congress, I've:

- **Secured millions** for affordable and transitional housing in Oakland.
- **Fought displacement** by expanding rental assistance and tenant protections.
- **Pushed for stronger housing policies** to ensure housing is a right, not a commodity.

I will continue to stand with tenants and fight for policies that keep people housed by.

- **Oakland's Rent Control Loopholes:** I support closing the current loopholes in the state to support tenant rights and protections to protect more tenants from excessive rent hikes.
- **Repealing State Barriers to Stronger Rent Control:** I support efforts to repeal Costa-Hawkins, which limits local governments' ability to expand rent stabilization.
- **Strengthening Enforcement:** I will work towards ensuring that Oakland's rent control policies are properly enforced and that landlords are held accountable for illegal evictions and rent gouging.

Housing should be a right, not a privilege.

5. Do you agree with the previous Mayor's Executive Order on removal of homeless encampments? 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?

This is a crisis that must be addressed with approaches that connect homeless people with housing, addiction, and/or mental health services.

As your Congresswoman, I secured billions in funding for Oakland to address our local needs. I will bring my national track record in securing resources to City Hall's fight to reduce homelessness and expand affordable housing options. The only effective way to address homelessness and the unhoused is through expanded public/private partnerships and collaboration between the City, County, other public agencies, and local nonprofits which secures our fair share of resources regionally and places people into supportive services locally—including working with the Veterans Administration to house unsheltered veterans with programs that include wrap-around services.

- On Day One, I will be a Mayor who fights for Oakland's fair share of funds to address our homelessness crisis, including advocating for our rightful proportion of Alameda County Measure W money—which provides people experiencing homelessness with housing and services.
- I will convene a City staff Unhoused Coordination Team. My goal is to see to it that every department, city employee, and taxpayer dollar spent on this crisis is focused on visible, measurable outcomes and results. I will also establish an Interjurisdictional Regional Team of nonprofit organizations and government agencies that will, within 60 days, establish a new, coordinated framework for addressing all aspects of Oakland's homeless crisis. This framework should include housing at all levels, mental and physical health care services, education, drug treatment, and job training. If elected Mayor, this effort will be led by my office.
- As Mayor, I would also work in partnership with Alameda County's detailed Regional Action Plan 2024 to address homelessness, which, among other issues, focuses on homeless prevention, permanent housing, and interim housing. Working with city staff, other agencies, and private property owners, I will ask for and develop recommendations on approaches that identify newly unsheltered people with referrals to suitable shelters as soon as possible, so the streets do not become home. I will address encampments on city streets and parks by working towards occupant relocation to more suitable shelters. This will be done with respect for the integrity of the individual, and with the goal of bringing stability to each person's life, ensuring they are provided the resources necessary for housing, addiction, and mental services before encampments are removed.
- My team would work with individuals living in motor homes to find suitable off-street city-supported relocation. One recommendation is to approach churches with large parking lots that might serve as motor home sites, with support from the city and nonprofits.

- As Mayor, I will pursue philanthropic investment in pilot programs that have worked well in other communities to reduce poverty, uplift struggling communities, and build a stronger city, including piloting a universal basic income program in Oakland for unhoused individuals who move into supportive housing.
6. Local jurisdictions have a legal obligation to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing in all their housing and community development policies. What should the City do to ensure a more equitable distribution of affordable housing across all parts of the City and equitable access to housing for communities of color?

Integrate racial equity into City housing development and policies. I will advance an equitable capital investment framework with the goal of reducing racial disparities in housing. My framework prioritizes the development of extremely low-income units for our unhoused neighbors and other vulnerable populations. I will partner with Oakland Housing Authority to advocate to HUD for more project-based vouchers to ensure anyone coming in off the street has the full-service, wrap around services they need to be successful.

7. Oakland has in the past considered adoption of a Tenant/Community 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?

Yes, I support giving tenants and nonprofit community organizations a **right of first offer and first refusal** when rental properties are put up for sale. Keeping Oakland residents in their homes must be a priority, and this is a **proven tool to fight displacement and gentrification**.

Successful models in **Berkeley, Washington D.C., and other cities** have helped tenants form cooperatives, partner with nonprofits, and secure long-term affordable housing. Oakland must **explore every viable option** to stabilize communities, prevent speculative displacement, and empower tenants.

A well-structured **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)** would:

- **Give tenants a fair chance to stay in their homes** rather than face displacement.
- **Help keep rental properties in community hands** to preserve long-term affordability.
- **Encourage responsible property transitions**, incentivizing landlords to work with tenants and nonprofits over corporate investors.

This policy must be **carefully crafted** to avoid unintended consequences for small landlords. It should include **reasonable timelines, financial support, and partnerships with mission-driven housing organizations** to ensure feasibility.

8. 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?

The City of Oakland must follow through on its commitments to prioritize surplus public land for affordable housing. The failure to enact an implementing ordinance since the **2018 Land Disposition Policy** was adopted is unacceptable. As Mayor, I would work to advance this process and move towards implementation.

Approach to Enacting a Public Land Ordinance

- **Support the drafting and passage of a Public Land Ordinance** that aligns with the 2018 policy.
- **Promote a transparent, community-driven process** to determine how public land can best serve Oakland's housing and economic needs.
- **Explore how surplus public land can be utilized for deeply affordable housing, mixed-use development, and community-serving spaces.**

Key Elements of a Strong Public Land Policy

- **Prioritizing deeply affordable housing** to address the needs of low-income and unhoused residents.
- **Advancing long-term affordability** by preventing public land from being sold off to speculative investors or luxury developers.
- **Supporting nonprofit, community land trusts, and cooperative housing models** to maintain community control of public land.
- **Encouraging strong community benefits agreements (CBAs)** for any private development on public land, including labor protections, environmental sustainability, and anti-displacement measures.

Role of the Community in Public Land Decisions

- **Advocate for a formalized public engagement process** where community members, housing advocates, and impacted residents have a direct voice.
 - **Increase transparency by making information on surplus public land and development proposals more accessible.**
 - **Work towards racial and economic equity in public land decisions** by prioritizing the needs of historically marginalized communities.
9. 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 **Coliseum site presents a major opportunity for East Oakland**, and any redevelopment must prioritize **affordable housing, good-paying jobs, sustainable infrastructure, and public amenities** to deliver long-term benefits for the surrounding community.

Key Community Benefits for Large-Scale Projects Like the Coliseum:

- **Affordable Housing:** Any development should include a significant portion of **affordable housing** to prevent displacement and expand housing options for Oakland residents.
- **Good-Paying Jobs:** Projects must include **strong labor agreements** to guarantee union jobs, local hiring, and workforce development opportunities for East Oakland residents.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Investments in **public transit, green spaces, and climate-resilient infrastructure** should be a priority.
- **Public Amenities:** The site should incorporate **parks, community spaces, and small business opportunities** that serve local residents.

Affordable Housing Targets & Funding

- **A significant percentage of housing should be affordable**, with units set aside for low- and moderate-income households.
- **Affordability levels should include deeply affordable housing**, ensuring access for residents earning **30-80% of the Area Median Income (AMI)**.
- **Funding should come from a mix of sources, including public investment, developer contributions, and state/federal affordable housing programs.**

Who Should Pay for the Development?

- **Developers should contribute to affordable housing and infrastructure through inclusionary housing requirements and community benefit agreements.**
- **Public investment should focus on affordability, transit, and infrastructure improvements that serve the broader community.**

- **State and federal funding should be leveraged** to support deeply affordable housing and workforce development programs.

The **Coliseum site represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity**, and the focus must be on **development that benefits the people of East Oakland—not just private investors**.

10. In 2013, The City Council adopted an ordinance setting aside 25% of Oakland’s boomerang funds (the City’s share of former redevelopment tax increment moneys) for affordable housing. Will you commit to ensuring these funds stay committed to housing solutions?

I support maintaining Oakland’s **boomerang funds** for affordable housing and will work to keep these funds dedicated to addressing our housing crisis. With the loss of Redevelopment, these resources remain one of the few **ongoing local funding sources** for deeply affordable and supportive housing. I will advocate for **prioritizing these funds for projects that prevent displacement, expand affordable housing, and support unhoused residents in securing stable housing**.

11. Outside of one-time voter approved bond measures the Affordable Housing Impact Fee and the Jobs/Housing Impact Fee are the City’s only significant ongoing funding sources for housing since the dissolution of Redevelopment in 2012. What if any changes would you make to how the City assesses or collects these fees? What are the advantages and disadvantages of impact fees versus inclusionary housing requirements?

The **Affordable Housing Impact Fee** and **Jobs/Housing Impact Fee** play an important role in generating local funding for affordable housing, particularly in the absence of Redevelopment funding since 2012. However, Oakland must continually assess whether these fees are structured in a way that maximizes affordability without discouraging responsible development.

Potential Changes to Impact Fees & Collection

- **Explore fee adjustments based on project scale and location** to encourage development in areas with high displacement risk while ensuring fees do not deter housing production.
- **Improve transparency and efficiency** in how impact fee revenues are allocated, ensuring funds are directed toward deeply affordable housing and supportive services.
- **Evaluate phased or deferred payment options** for affordable housing projects or developments that include significant community benefits to incentivize on-site affordability.

- **Expand regional collaboration** to secure additional funding sources, leveraging county and state resources to complement impact fee revenues.

Impact Fees vs. Inclusionary Housing Requirements

Impact Fees

Advantages: Generates flexible funding that can be used for deeply affordable housing, preservation, and supportive housing.

Advantages: Can be pooled and leveraged with state and federal funding to support larger-scale affordable housing projects.

Disadvantages: Fees alone may not produce enough deeply affordable housing and depend on consistent market-rate development.

Disadvantages: Developers may pass costs onto renters or homebuyers if not carefully structured.

Inclusionary Housing Requirements

Advantages: Ensures affordable units are built within market-rate developments, promoting economic diversity in new projects.

Advantages: Provides on-site affordability, reducing displacement pressures in high-cost neighborhoods.

Disadvantages: May lead to fewer overall housing units if developers reduce production due to affordability requirements.

Disadvantages: Can be difficult to enforce if affordability terms are not well-monitored over time.

I believe a hybrid approach—maintaining impact fees while strengthening inclusionary housing requirements where feasible—could help Oakland generate funding for deeply affordable housing while ensuring new developments contribute to on-site affordability.

Policies should be structured to maximize affordability without slowing overall housing production.

12. When the City makes significant investments (e.g., infrastructure, public facilities) or regulatory concessions (e.g., rezoning, relaxed development standards, permit streamlining) for specific sites or areas, what kinds of housing benefits should it require in return?

When the City invests in infrastructure, public facilities, or provides regulatory concessions like rezoning and permit streamlining, it must prioritize **affordable housing, equitable development, and community benefits** in return.

Key Housing Benefits to Require:

- **Affordable Housing Commitments:**
 - Require a **significant percentage of affordable units**, including deeply affordable housing at **30-80% AMI**.
 - Ensure **long-term affordability** to prevent conversions to market rate.
- **Equitable Development & Community Protections:**
 - **Prioritize community-based developers** and nonprofit housing organizations.
 - **Include strong anti-displacement protections** and right-to-return programs.
 - **Support mixed-use developments** that benefit local businesses.
- **Labor & Sustainability Standards:**
 - Require **good-paying, union jobs** and local hire provisions.
 - Promote **transit-oriented, green building developments** aligned with sustainability goals.
- **Reinvestment into Housing & Services:**
 - Direct a portion of increased land value or developer profits into **affordable housing and tenant protections**.
 - Use **impact fees or developer contributions** to expand deeply affordable housing.