

**Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action  
2024 Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate Name: Elana Auerbach  
District / Office being sought: Berkeley City Council D4**

1. Berkeley's Housing Element lays out the city's plan for new housing construction through 2031, ensuring the city can meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of ~9,000 homes.

The Housing Element commits Berkeley to a number of major policy changes in order to meet state requirements for affirmatively furthering fair housing, including citywide zoning for "missing middle" housing, a San Pablo Specific Plan, an updated Demolition Ordinance, and upzoning along North Shattuck, Solano, and College Ave, among other items.

What is your view on the Housing Element and these policies? Please discuss your ideas and priorities around:

- a. Missing Middle housing
  - 1. I am supportive of building more missing middle housing, as long as such housing is affordable and rent controlled. Our city has had enough of market-rate high rises that price out our neighbors, particularly our neighbors of color.
- a. San Pablo specific plan
  - 1. I am excited about the possibility of developing housing on the 50+ vacant sites identified in the specific plan. In my capacity as a city councilmember, I would work to ensure that strong affordability requirements are built into new housing developments. I am also excited about the potential for supporting local small businesses that have struggled to stay open. I will support our small business community as they face risks of closures, particularly through commercial vacancy taxes and small business incubators.
- a. Demolition ordinance
  - 1. I am opposed to Berkeley's Demolition Ordinance. If we're serious about ending the housing crisis, we shouldn't be looking for ways to make it more difficult for homeowners to build ADUs.
  - 2. Also, with the recent ruling that SB9 is unconstitutional for charter cities, this gives Berkeley back local control of single family lots and there's no need for this demolition ordinance to pave the way to build up to four homes on a single family.
- a. Zoning for housing in high-resource neighborhoods like North Shattuck, Solano, and College Ave
  - 1. Upzoning can lead to speculation, increased land values, and displacement. By the same token, upzoning has not led to greater racial integration and opportunities for vulnerable communities. Upzoning alone is unlikely to make housing affordable to those most in need in Berkeley and make Berkeley's housing market more equitable. However, I would support upzoning with strong affordability

requirements built in that focuses on housing working families at mid and low income levels.

2. Please describe how you would approach addressing the **climate emergency** if elected (or reelected). How would you achieve the goals set forth in 2006 Measure G, which set a goal of 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050? What does the city need to do to reach carbon neutrality by 2045? How can Berkeley become a Fossil Fuel Free City?

In 2009, Berkeley City Council passed the Berkeley Climate Action Plan, which includes many achievable goals that we have yet to focus on. Some of the goals include:

- A commitment to reaching net-zero emissions in 2045 or sooner
- New and existing Berkeley buildings achieve zero net energy consumption through increased efficiency and a shift to renewable energy sources
- Zero waste is sent to landfills
- The majority of food consumed in Berkeley is produced locally

We have had several toxic mishaps that must be prevented in the future by hiring and maintaining a trained and dedicated workforce.

- city's failure to abate methane emissions from the closed landfill at Cesar Chavez Park
- Berkeley established a creek protection ordinance, but city staff were not effectively educated. In April 2019, firefighters extinguished a fire in a garbage truck and uncontrolled runoff killed the steelhead in Codornices Creek.
- Berkeley had to be sued by the EPA to finally start repairing the system that was spilling raw sewage onto the streets.

I will support a seamless, green, zero-emission public transit system that is accessible and fare-free for all. I will invite the Chechenyo speaking Lisjan Ohlone people to teach and guide city leaders how to plan for seven generations into the future.

I will also advocate for programs to clean up blight in our city including the creation of art on the windows of empty storefronts and transforming vacant lots into green spaces, parks, or community gardens.

3. In your opinion, what was the most important City Council vote on Berkeley's housing crisis in the past four years? Briefly describe the issue, what you think of the Council's decision, and what you would have done had you been on the Council.

The vote taken in March of 2023 to support UC Berkeley's development on People's Park. This decision has had absolutely devastating consequences, displacing our most vulnerable neighbors from the network of resources and support many of them relied on for survival. I am not opposed to the building of new student housing, especially student housing that serves our unhoused students, but recklessly building new student housing only exacerbates gentrification and the housing crisis. There were many already paved over lots owned by UC within blocks of People's Park where student housing will be built. If UC were committed to actually housing their students, they would've started with one of those lots—which they do plan to build on—instead of the most contested lot. If that had happened, there would've been 1,100 more student beds available in Fall 2023.

I would've voted against it and shined a light on how People's Park was a manufactured blight because the sale of illicit drugs was permitted there 24/7 by UCPD and BPD. I would've challenged Police Chief Louis and asked why the queen pin drug dealer was permitted to run her operation overtly and the law wasn't enforced in People's Park.

I will work to ensure that UC Berkeley caps its enrollment to prevent even more strain on our city.

4. In your opinion, what was the most important climate or environmental issue faced by the Berkeley City Council in the last four years? Briefly describe the issue, what you think of the Council's decision, and what you would have done had you been on the Council.

The repeal of Berkeley's natural gas ban, first established in 2019. Natural gas in homes contributes to about 13% of the US's greenhouse gas emissions. As a city councilmember, I would push for subsidies that encourage homeowners to transition to electric appliances.

5. To achieve its RHNA goals, Berkeley must continue to build homes for all income levels. These new residents will need to travel within Berkeley. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation comprise roughly 60% of total emissions in Berkeley.

How would you ensure that Berkeley continues to reduce GHG emissions while adding new homes?

We need strong affordable housing requirements for new developments. By encouraging affordable housing developments near local BART stations, while also working with the AC Transit Board to expand bus lines, we can reduce our city's reliance on cars while also solving our housing crisis.

6. Berkeley has a long history of using zoning, restrictive covenants and redlining to achieve racial and economic segregation. This history continues to shape Berkeley today.

Recent research by the Turner Center at UC Berkeley suggests that inclusionary zoning requirements, which mandate on-site restricted affordable housing in new developments, may have the effect of reducing overall housing construction, including the production of affordable units. However, on-site affordable housing can also be an effective tool for desegregating neighborhoods.

What is your perspective on how Berkeley should use inclusionary zoning requirements, versus other affordable housing development options (such as in-lieu fees)?

I am supportive of strong affordability requirements, ideally working towards the goal of having 80% affordable housing requirements for all new developments. We need to end in-lieu developer fees, which give developers a way to pay their way out of building the affordable units we so desperately need.

7. Many of the highest income neighborhoods in Berkeley are also in the Hillside Overlay, portions of which are in the California Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CalFire VHFHSZ). How should we balance fire risk with affirmatively furthering fair housing?

I am against building housing in high resource areas that would contribute to worsening wildfires. Although housing is good to have, I believe that the city's resources, already stretched thin, would be put to better use building affordable and social housing that serve working class people.