

Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Todd Andrew

District / Office being sought: Berkeley City Council, District 5

1. Please describe how you would approach addressing the housing crisis if elected (or reelected). How would you achieve Berkeley's RHNA targets for extremely low income, very low income, low income, moderate income, and above moderate income homes? Where should these homes go? How should this be achieved?

RESPONSE: I believe we need an "all of the above" approach to housing, and affordable housing should be our top priority. In my opinion, too often we see an ideological approach to housing that *eliminates* options rather than exploring them. This lack of creativity and flexibility *increases* housing cost, scarcity, insecurity and displacement, and ill serves current residents of Berkeley and potential newcomers. I am open to discussions with BNHCA members, individually and as a group, on the often arcane question of housing, and the other important issues raised in this questionnaire.

I also want to acknowledge that there are those in my district, including supporters, who will disagree with the opinions on housing I've formed based on the facts as I understand them. I'm very interested in hearing about their concerns directly. I believe they are motivated by a love of the very same things about Berkeley that have helped to shape my opinions, which is a good basis for discussion.

How we approach the discussion is as important as anything. More housing doesn't need to be an epic battle between opposing acronyms or single family versus multi-family, or an ideological Armageddon between private and public, for-profit and non-profit. It can simply be a reaffirmation and reflection of our Berkeley values of sound environmental stewardship and equity and inclusion.

It seems most problems like our current housing crisis can be traced to imbalances created by either market forces or misguided public policy, and in housing we seem to have two imbalances: historic income and wealth disparities and a shortage of housing supply, which is the component we can most readily address locally.

Estimates of the housing shortage in California are as high as 3.5 million units. Climate scientists tell us most of these units should be concentrated as near to public transportation as possible or come with improvements to public transportation, or both.

In discussing the housing shortage, I think it's important we remember the Berkeley Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO) of 1973 and subsequent down-zonings closely followed the California Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 and the United States Fair Housing

Act of 1968. The intent of the NPO may not have been to revive the exclusionary housing policies that existed prior to these Acts, but many experts believe that was a result. In the same way we are asking the nation to acknowledge a history of systemic racism and perhaps unintended disparate impacts, we can do so locally.

Not surprisingly, there were very few housing units built after the NPO. [According to Berkeleyside](#) only 600 units were built between 1970 and 1990, and according to a local developer only 120 *net* new units were added between 1980 and 2000. So, in a very real sense, we are now making up for lost time. (As an aside, I've heard adversaries of rent control say it put a damper on new construction after it was passed in June 1980, but the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Ordinance did not apply to new construction.)

I believe Berkeley is unique among Bay Area cities of our geographic size and population in having *three* BART stations. We need to avail ourselves of that fact in our transportation and housing planning. In addition, we have an underutilized 720-space parking garage within one block of the Downtown Berkeley BART station. We need to avail ourselves of that fact in planning the Ashby and North Berkeley BART housing projects, and new housing projects downtown.

Speaking of downtown, the voters approved the Downtown Area Plan (DAP) with 64% of the vote in 2010, including multiple tall residential buildings, and rejected with 74% of the vote a 2014 measure to essentially overturn it that would have eliminated approximately 1,000 units of housing. The current mayor – a District 4 councilmember at the time – and District 5 councilmember – a Zoning & Adjustments Board member at the time – were two of the authors of the second measure to eliminate this housing. The DAP projects were also slated to enable hundreds of units of low-income housing through tens of millions of dollars in affordable housing mitigation fees. Unfortunately, opponents were recently successful in delaying and ultimately derailing one such project at 2211 Harold Way, with the failure of anyone on Council except Councilmember Droste to intervene to save the project, including the current District 5 councilmember.

In the neighborhoods, we can look at low-density “missing middle” housing of two, three and four units, in addition to ADUs, which will in the vast majority of cases be more affordable than single family residences. I believe we should explore form-based code to ensure that projects are a good fit in scale and form with the neighborhoods in which they're built, and to speed the approval process and increase their economic viability at the same time. Fire safety, and evacuation routes where this risk is greatest, including re-examination of parking requirements and regulations to ensure safe egress where density increases, should be an integral part of this process.

In my work and research on the topic of affordable housing, I've also come across the concept of multi-family bonds, or revenue bonds. This would enable the building of more affordable housing than a reliance merely on general obligation bonds or housing mitigation fees, as the revenue stream from rent payments would be a significant component of the repayment of

such bonds. However, it is my understanding that the units would remain affordable for a shorter period of time.

According to the [City of Berkeley 2015-2023 Housing Element](#) (p.30), 22.9% of Berkeley homeowners are low income, very low income, or extremely low income, and we must take this into account in any affordable housing solutions we consider, including parcel taxes and bond measures, lest we foster the very unaffordability that we are trying to address.

I would like to add that, though inclusion in the form of future residents and newcomers is important, to the extent it is legal I would also like to see affordable housing set-asides for current Berkeley residents who are experiencing or could be expected to experience housing insecurity or potential displacement.

Berkeley is a leader in many things. While we have ceded the mantle of leadership in housing to Minneapolis, Portland and Seattle, I believe we can still create unique solutions that conform to Berkeley values and respect the built environment. **But we need to make it a priority and eschew ideological rigidity.**

2. What actions have you taken, beyond this current campaign, in line with the approach you described above?

RESPONSE: I've been an active member of North Berkeley Now and Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action, spoken at City Council meetings in favor of housing at North Berkeley BART, and supported the campaigns of candidates who prioritize such steps.

3. Please describe how you would approach addressing the climate crisis if elected (or reelected). How would you achieve the goals set forth in 2006 Measure G? What does the city need to do to reach carbon neutrality by 2045? How can Berkeley become a Fossil Fuel Free City?

RESPONSE: Transportation and housing are the two biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), with transportation being far and away the leader. It is **the** main reason California has stalled in its progress toward statewide GHG reduction goals.

The experts tell us the most important step we can take is to build transit-oriented housing, and housing nearer to where people work. Perhaps the most glaring example where this did **not** happen is 2211 Harold Way, which would have provided over \$20 million in community benefits, including: a) \$10.5 million in affordable housing mitigation fees to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which would have built about 100 affordable units when it was proposed in 2015; b) good Project Labor Agreement union jobs; and c) others. In addition, it would have brought approximately 300 market-rate units to within one block of the Downtown Berkeley BART station.

In my opinion, it is disingenuous when public officials who fail to make such projects a priority claim that affordable housing and climate change are major priorities of theirs.

Possible other steps to move us closer to our climate goals include, over time and not necessarily in order:

- 1) Streamline and incentivize distributed solar and battery installation permitting, and develop more islandable microgrids, in partnership with East Bay Community Energy (EBCE).
- 2) Promote as much building electrification in appliance replacement (e.g., of water-heaters and HVAC) and major remodel construction as possible.
- 3) Promote more complete streets, including the Vision Zero framework, that de-emphasize vehicular thru-traffic, provide preferential treatment for bikes, pedestrians (e.g., bulbouts) and electrified active transit modes.
- 4) Create pedestrian-only zones in downtown and other districts, coordinated with active transit hubs through AC-Transit.
- 5) Electrify the city fleet of vehicles and buildings.
- 6) Increase deployment of public EV charging infrastructure.
- 7) Move to a paving policy and plan that de-emphasizes petroleum-based surface treatments for more durable (and permeable) green infrastructure.
- 8) Permit more walkable commercial infrastructure and density at transit hubs. (According to MTC, people who live and work close to transit are 10-times more likely to ride transit than people who don't.)

In addition to climate, affordable housing, COVID-19 and other emerging challenges, we have existing challenges in both infrastructure and pension obligations, where we have almost a \$700 million deficit in each. We need leaders who acknowledges these facts, and who make it a priority to ensure we are using our resources as efficiently and effectively as possible in other areas. In other words, if you believe government can do good things, you've got to have good government, and I will make this a priority.

4. What actions have you taken, beyond this current campaign, in line with the approach you described above?

RESPONSE: I've been an active member of North Berkeley Now and Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action, spoken at City Council meetings in favor of housing at North Berkeley BART, supported the campaigns of candidates who prioritize such steps, and joined and otherwise supported and promoted the work of organizations such as the Sierra Club.

5. a) For incumbents seeking reelection: please share a vote you are most (or least) proud of in the last four years on a housing issue. What was the issue? Why did you vote the way you did? How do you feel about it now, and why?

b) For candidates not yet elected to the office they are seeking: in your opinion, what was the most important housing issue that Council voted on in the past four years, or expects to vote

on before November? What was the issue? Do you believe Council's decision was the best one? If you had been on Council, what would you have done?

RESPONSE: It is almost impossible to pick just one. Please see [this Councilmember Droste tweetstorm](#) from April regarding the Opportunity Zone measure brought by Councilmember Harrison shortly after the COVID-19 shutdown began, including her list of the many other inconsistencies in advocacy and policy for public servants who purport to be passionate about advancing affordable housing.

Also, housing, climate, and transportation leadership go beyond just agenda items. Leadership in the effort to advance projects like Harold Way, which was approved under a previous council, matter a great deal, as do councilmember appointments to city commissions like ZAB, LPC, Planning, Public Works and Transportation.

But to answer your question, I believe the same ideological rigidity that drives certain members of council and their allies to base their housing dogma on Vienna and its 50% social housing as a model – a city of almost 2 million people with no single family zoning – also leads them to put a disproportionate burden on our small property owners to solve an exclusionary housing problem that is largely of their own making.

My example is the appealingly-named Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), which by most accounts has proven a failure in Washington, D.C., and was thankfully tabled here in Berkeley. It would mostly result in non-profit purchases, not tenant purchases; and create significant delays, potentially negative impact on value, and other problems for the property owners who want or need to sell their small multi-unit properties.

Instead, let's build more BMR housing for purchase. In the future, I would also like us to look at incorporating BMR housing for ownership into affordable housing initiatives like Measure O and any measures that might be promulgated by the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority.

Affordability is an issue of income levels, financing, and supply. Some areas are outside of local control.

Historic levels of income and wealth inequality that exacerbate lack of housing affordability can most effectively be addressed at the national and, to some degree, the state levels.

With regard to financing, Fannie, Freddie, FHA and VA guidelines are set at the federal level; CalFHA guidelines are set by the state. However, as efforts move forward to create a public bank in the East Bay, we may see opportunities to help low-income, low-asset buyers that wouldn't otherwise exist. In my opinion, our approach should include an analysis of whether existing community- and social-minded financial institutions such as Beneficial State Bank or Aspiration, can help us achieve our goals without incurring unnecessary costs.

Until that time, I would like to study the experience of Oakland's Homeownership and Mortgage Assistance Programs, in addition to Alameda County's Mortgage Credit Certificate

Program, in which Berkeley participates, to seek opportunities for improvement. Increasing the supply of affordable units for ownership would be crucial to this effort, because otherwise throwing additional capital at existing supply will just tend to drive up prices.

Locally, land use policy, mandates, fees, approval timelines and other factors are critical to supply, and study after study shows lack of supply to be a major contributor to lack of affordability. Form-based code and zoning may be of help in that regard.

Now THAT would create tenant opportunities to purchase!

6. a) For incumbents seeking reelection: please share a vote you are most (or least) proud of in the last four years on a climate or environmental issue. What was the issue? Why did you vote the way you did? How do you feel about it now, and why?

b) For candidates not yet elected to the office they are seeking: in your opinion, what was the most important climate or environmental issue that Council voted on in the past four years, or expects to vote on before November? What was the issue? Do you believe Council's decision was the best one? If you had been on Council, what would you have done?

RESPONSE: I agree with the all-electric requirement council passed for new construction.

From a SPUR event I attended last fall, I learned from an expert panelist that "even if every power plant in California were coal-fired, it would make sense to power every structure in the state solely with electricity."

It is my understanding that there is only one coal-fired power plant left in California.

7. Berkeley must continue adding more homes in order to achieve its RHNA goals, especially for extremely low income, low income, and moderate income households. These new households will need ways to get around Berkeley. At the same time, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation comprise roughly 60% of total emissions in Berkeley.

How would you ensure Berkeley continues to add new homes while reducing GHGs?

RESPONSE: I believe I've addressed this in many ways above. Nonetheless...

As part of my regular communication with residents in District 5 – not just email or mail communications, but meeting them where they are when safe to do so – I envision special neighborhood organizing efforts to get residents into AC Transit buses in order to increase ridership. We are going to have to find a way to get people to transition into shared transportation, and it will take local, as opposed to just transit agency, effort to make it happen.

I would also support allocations to AC Transit at the Alameda County Transportation Commission – by helping AC Transit win funding through the existing sales tax and by

advocating for improvements to spending plans the next time the tax comes up for reauthorization.

I would urge my Council colleagues to be as flexible as possible in supporting Bus Rapid Transit in as many corridors as feasible, and work with AC Transit planners to streamline the city's permit process for changing bus stop locations to make routes as efficient as possible.

Long-term, I would like to look at planning for a “car-less” Downtown Berkeley, and suspect we could draw on our experiences with the North Berkeley and Ashby BART station developments in designing the concept. It goes without saying this process would involve *significant* community input and planning, from individuals and Downtown Berkeley Association merchants and AC Transit alike. I envision some automobile access, primarily to the parking garages, but a mostly car-less environment on Shattuck from University on the north to perhaps Bancroft or Channing on the south; Oxford on the east to MLK on the west between University and Allston, and Milvia on the west between Allston and either Bancroft or Channing. It’s exciting to me to think we could meet community and merchant and public transit concerns while creating pedestrian-only access (other than the aforementioned parking garages) to the BART station, the YMCA, the Central Branch of the library, Berkeley High School, Civic Center Park, City Hall and other points of interest.

8. Berkeley has a long history of segregation, racial zoning, restrictive covenants, and redlining, which continue to impact our community to this day. Much of this history was, and remains, reflected in Berkeley’s zoning restrictions, with resulting implications for greenhouse gas emissions.

How would you address Berkeley’s history and impacts of segregation through housing policy?

RESPONSE: I believe I’ve mostly addressed this above.