

Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Jesse Arreguin

District / Office being sought: Berkeley Mayor

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?

Berkeley is facing a severe shortage of affordable homes, made even more acute by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of our neighbors are facing housing insecurity and are unable to pay their rent. Small landlords are seeing a reduction in rental income, making it difficult in some cases to pay their mortgage or bills. Getting our community through this health and economic crisis is my highest priority. When COVID-19 spread in Alameda County in March and the city issued a Shelter in Place order, I immediately authored and got passed emergency legislation to prevent residential and commercial evictions in Berkeley. We later strengthened these protections to cover all evictions. We also launched the Berkeley Relief Fund which raised \$4.4 Million in public and private dollars to provide emergency grants to businesses, artists and residential tenants facing significant rent burden. To date we have been able to help roughly 700 families through our Housing Retention Program. Despite a record \$40 Million budget deficit, I was able to get additional \$1.1 Million into this fund to provide additional housing assistance to Berkeley tenants. We will continue these eviction protections and emergency housing funds as long as the COVID-19 emergency exists.

But we know that Berkeley had underproduced the housing needed before COVID-19. Estimates show that California needs to build 3.5 million new homes to address the current need. Regionally, we are expecting 3 million more people in our region over the next 30 years. We must continue to produce new homes at a range of income levels to meet the current and projected future housing need.

My thinking and approach to housing has evolved during my time in office. While I came into the Mayor's office with the support of neighborhood leaders and preservationists, it became increasingly clear that efforts to delay or stop housing were hurting our community. As I saw more people on our streets, and neighbors being priced out of Berkeley, I felt we needed a different approach. I have come to embrace efforts to build new housing, and have support most housing projects that have come to the Berkeley City Council over the past four years. In addition, I have supported planning efforts for more housing including the Southside area rezoning, the Missing Middle Housing study, and I am leading a process with BART to plan for over 1,000 new homes at the Ashby and North Berkeley BART stations. Berkeley is seeing the most housing production than any time in decades. We must continue the progress by adjusting zoning along San Pablo Avenue, Telegraph Avenue, and explore changing zoning in

our R-1 Districts to add appropriate density in our residential neighborhoods. In addition we must continue to encourage and streamline the production of Accessory Dwelling Units. I strongly believe that every part of our city must meet our shared responsibility to provide new housing. This will significantly expand our housing supply, since we cannot build enough units solely on our commercial corridors. It will also correct decades of racial exclusion and segregation that have kept people of color and low income households out of single family neighborhoods.

As President of ABAG, our regional planning agency, I am leading efforts to develop our RHNA and Plan Bay Area 2050. I believe our RHNA must focus growth in job rich areas and High Resource Areas to address racial exclusion and correct the jobs-housing imbalance. We expect every community to get a higher share of units to plan for this cycle, including Berkeley. The only way Berkeley will be able to plan for the 6,000+ additional units over this eight year cycle is by adjusting zoning on our commercial corridors, building housing at our BART stations, and allowing more multi-family housing in our single-family residential neighborhoods.

Ultimately we need to address the 3 P's – protection of existing tenants, preservation of existing housing and production of new housing. This is has been my focus in addressing our housing crisis. While building new housing is important, we won't make meaningful progress in addressing our housing and homeless crises if we don't protect our neighbors from displacement and protect naturally occurring affordable housing.

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

As mentioned in my response to question #1, I have supported nearly every project which has come before the Council during my four years as Mayor. I am leading with Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani and BART, efforts to build new transit rich communities at our Ashby and North Berkeley BART stations. My work on expanding tenant rights, anti-displacement resources and to buy and preserve existing affordable housing has helped us keep people in their homes. As ABAG President, I am leading regional efforts on ending racial segregation in housing, expanding transit oriented development and funding to build affordable housing.

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?

The climate crisis is arguably the biggest worldwide issue of our generation, and the clock is running out for us to act. While Measure G helped lay a foundation for climate resiliency, our understanding of climate change and its consequences have evolved over the last 14 years, and it is increasingly clear that more urgent action is needed (more details on what I have done on

this are in question #4). While we have made strides in reducing electricity consumption, transportation remains a major source of greenhouse gas emissions in Berkeley, accounting for 59% of the City's total GHGs. To solve this, we need to end our reliance on fossil fueled vehicles, promote public transit, and create transit orientated development. We also need to promote and incentivize alternatives to those currently using fossil fuel-powered cars such as improving our pedestrian, bike, public transit, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

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

To build upon the work of Measure G, I introduced Measure R in 2018, an advisory measure that led to the creation of Vision 2050. This is a 30-year plan to transform our city's infrastructure by utilizing the latest technology in order to promote a green and resilient city for decades to come. While this is a long-term vision, I have also advanced short-term goals, including setting a goal to be a fossil fuel city by 2030. I have also voted on major legislation in recent years, including declaring a climate emergency, developing infrastructure to promote switching to electric vehicles, recommitted ourselves to the Paris Climate Accord, prohibited natural gas in new construction, and phasing out single use disposables. In 2020, I have put forward two measures to combat climate change: Measure GG, to place a small fee on rideshare trips (such as Uber and Lyft) to undo the dilapidation they have caused on our infrastructure and environment; and Measure HH, an increase to the user utility tax to be used for implementing green, energy efficient projects and clean transportation.

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?

The development of housing at the North Berkeley and Ashby BART stations is our best opportunity to fulfill the promises we have made in making significant impacts to our climate goals. I worked with former Councilmember Maio to begin this process after decades of inaction due to it being considered a third-rail proposal. We cannot let NIMBYism get in the way of addressing the urgent climate crisis. In 2019, the City Council voted to move forward with an agreement with BART that lays out the steps to develop these sites. I am proud to be taking a leading role in this major project that will enable a new generation of residents to call Berkeley home.

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?

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?

I serve on the board of East Bay Community Energy, a new energy provider formed in 2018 that provides clean, reliable, and locally sourced electricity to most of Alameda County. During my time on the board, I have taken action to expand our renewable portfolio, ensuring that all electricity in Berkeley comes from carbon-free energy. As a result, Berkeley's greenhouse gas emissions from electricity has plummeted over the last couple of years. As Berkeley has done for decades, I am proud that we are leading the way on environmental policy while ensuring that we have a reliable source of energy while creating local, green jobs.

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?

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?

As the President of the Association of Bay Area Governments, I am in a key position of advancing RHNA goals not just in Berkeley, but throughout the entire Bay Area. During this time, we have been planning RHNA goals for the next cycle. It is time for cities that have not been pulling their weight to build more housing. ABAG, empowered by new state legislation over the past few years to develop more housing, is working to make that happen. As mentioned in previous answers, transit orientated development is key to increasing housing production and reducing GHG emissions from transportation. Many of the hundreds of units being constructed and approved under my watch are located near transit stops, with plans to develop housing at North Berkeley and Ashby BART underway.

To help advance the creation of affordable housing for extremely low income, low income, and moderate income households, I developed Measure O in 2018, a \$135 million bond for the creation of affordable housing. Already, these funds are being used to create hundreds of units of affordable housing. I have also led the way on the Berkeley Way project, the largest affordable housing development in the City's history with 142 units and homeless services, which broke ground earlier this year. I would like to take the success of Measure O and place it on a regional level. While we were unable to move forward on a regional bond in 2020 due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, this option must remain on the table when the time is right.

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?

It is important to reflect on the mistakes of our past if we are to move forward. Indeed, Berkeley was not immune to the racist policies whose impacts continue to reverberate today. To get a better understanding of the policies we can implement to make amends, I voted to move forward on a Missing Middle Report, which among other things will review Berkeley's zoning code which will help us make reforms to promote housing equity. This is even more important with access to housing becoming a major policy point in the 2020 presidential election and the dog whistle rhetoric around low-income housing.

There is no denying the gentrification and displacement that has taken place over the last couple of decades. That is why during my time as Mayor, I led budgetary decisions to invest more funding into anti-displacement measures than ever before. Through that, and the recent eviction protections during COVID-19, we have saved countless households, including many low-income and households of color, from eviction. I have also introduced the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), which will give tenants the first right of refusal to purchase their building if it goes on sale. By working with non-profits, we can create equity for communities that for too long have been egregiously denied those opportunities. I am also looking into a Local Preference Policy to give previously displaced households the right to return to deed-restricted units.