

**Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action  
2020 Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate Name:** Deborah Matthews

**District / Office being sought:** Berkeley City Council, District 3

**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?**

I, Deborah Matthews, will fight for a more enjoyable Berkeley community that is inclusive of everyone while promoting equity and justice. The RHNA determined 2,959 housing units, of varying levels of affordability, must be delivered by the city of Berkeley between January 1st 2014 and October 31, 2022. As the Co-Founder of South Berkeley Now!, I have spent the past two years working to deliver equitable and sustainable housing at Ashby Bart stations and supporting the efforts of North Berkeley Now! for housing on the NB Bart Station. SBN! is a grassroots organization funded entirely by our committee members, advocating mercilessly for housing, equity, diversity, and reinvestment into South Berkeley. Aside from North Berkeley Bart and the Ashby Bart stations, I strongly believe in accessory dwelling units. There are many hurdles we must overcome in regards to these housing initiatives including; funding sources, delays in planning and project approvals, community engagement and buy-in, and obviously COVID-19. Housing must accommodate and can be achieved through my nine point housing plan,(short list) which includes points 1) Dismantle Historical Racism and Inequity Through Reform 2) Utilize bond measure funds, such as U1, Measure O, and Measure P, to address the discriminatory practices in housing and the disproportionate effect on African Americans of rising rents and home prices, as well as predatory lending practices and redlining 3) Protect Vulnerable Residents From Housing Displacement, Make the emergency rental assistance fund available to everyone. 4) Provide non-profit organizations with immediate access to the emergency rental assistance fund to improve their ability to support the housing needs of tenants facing immediate eviction.' In order to reach our housing goals we must explore super efficient actions and solutions to said hurdles in order to ensure equitable and sustainable housing is available for all members of our community.

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

I am a cofounder of South Berkeley Now! and have lobbied in partnership with California YIMBY (Yes, In My Backyard), SB50 (More Housing Act), SB899 (affordable housing on faith institution and non profit properties), and SB902 (local control for housing density).

**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 city of Berkeley has been at the forefront of advocating for a better and cleaner future. Mayor Jesse Arreguin and our city council officials have continuously made important initiatives in favor of combating climate change. Including, becoming the first city in 2019 to ban natural gas in new construction and the aim to reduce Berkeley's greenhouse emissions by

80% below 2000 levels by 2050. I continuously utilize my platform to highlight the importance of divestment from fossil fuel companies that disproportionately impact communities of color. Alongside supporting the divestment of fossil fuel companies in Berkeley, I have set 3 ways to enact her climate change action:

1. Support social entrepreneurial ventures and environmentally focused companies within the Berkeley community.
2. Create a reward system for members of the community that contribute to the agricultural resources within Berkeley.
3. Tackle Environmental Racism and Classicism

Each of these ways works together to benefit African-American, Asian, Latino, and other historically oppressed community members in District 3. For example, the first way will ultimately cause a positive net effect in Berkeley's economy, while pushing for social entrepreneurial projects that will significantly contribute to Berkeley's climate plan of action. The second way will create an incentive for members of the community to get involved while ensuring that Berkeley continues to stay consciously green. In comparison, the third and final way will work to pressure California to divest from fossil fuel companies while redistributing the wealth into low-income communities, including education, infrastructure, and social welfare programs. These distinct and prominent ways that I plan to combat climate change will not only boost Berkeley's local economy but make District 3 greener and safer for generations to come.

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

I have been a community advocate for Fossil Free California and the No Coal in Oakland initiative to stop the threat of coal emissions being transmitted by rail in Oakland, both locally and overseas.

**5.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?**

The most important housing issue that Council voted on surrounded the 2902 Adeline St, Housing Project. This proposed development was set to be six stories high and establish fifty residential housing units, many of which were low-income units which still have not been made a reality. No, I do not believe the council's decision was the best one. My position as a council member would have wholeheartedly supported this housing project to benefit the housing needs of our community residents here in South Berkeley. While welcoming small and micro-businesses to South Berkeley as well on the first floor commercial level. We must spotlight frivolous lawsuits like the one filed on this project at 2902 Adeline Street, as a strategy to interfere with the emergency need of housing. Housing delayed is housing denied.

**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?**

b. The most important environmental issue the council has voted on, in my opinion, was the Single Use Disposable Foodware and Litter Reduction Ordinance. While I do not necessarily agree or disagree with the decision, I would have requested additional research and review be conducted prior to making my vote. I would have wanted to fully examine the benefits, practicality, and other intersecting issues that would surround the ordinance. The 25 cent surcharge appears to be minute but brings up an equity and practicality issue for community members and businesses alike, specifically small businesses. All businesses had to implement an additional tax key for every take out transaction including a beverage, which again brings up questions of equity and practicality for individual businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that there are many underlying health and equity implications within this ordinance.

**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?

I believe developing transit oriented housing serves as a great solution to the intersecting issues of sustainable and equitable housing and reducing GHGs. They offer a major solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through promoting a walkable community with greater numbers of transit use, aside from transportation via a car.

We must also prioritize the refurbishment of our buildings with unsound Infrastructure currently in Berkeley. Refurbishing buildings so that they neglect fossil fuel energy, and turn to more renewable sources. Using more environmentally sustainable materials to repair our roads and sidewalks must also be prioritized. I have spent the majority of my career focused on prioritizing the establishment of equitable and sustainable housing to low-income or displaced residents in Berkeley. The conversation surrounding equitable housing for those in need intersects directly with that of environmental emission reduction. Though there are dozens of initiatives we can take as a city to cut our greenhouse gas emissions, I believe building smarter and more sustainably would benefit our entire community right now, and many years down the line.

**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?**

**Preamble:** Deborah Matthews will fight for a more enjoyable Berkeley community that promotes equity and justice and is inclusive of everyone the City of Berkeley has been allocated 2,959 housing units. . From creating the South Berkeley African American Arts & Cultural District, to protecting residents from displacement and homelessness, to supporting local

business and property owners, Deborah will get it done to strengthen the Berkeley community and provide for all of Berkeley's residents. This focus will shape each and every policy advocated on the campaign trail, from the creation of the South Berkeley African American Arts & Cultural District to proposals for the city budget. Deborah seeks to bring the community together by supporting local businesses, investing in the community, and making housing more inclusive and attainable. What follows is Deborah Matthews' nine points for Berkeley housing and development practices.

### **1. Create a South Berkeley African American Arts & Cultural District**

The South Berkeley African American Arts & Cultural District will feature African Americans' cultural contributions and historical legacy, as well as the legacy of other communities of color. Create business incentives for businesses with a history of having been part of the community for many years.

Acknowledge the contribution of activists, educators, and civic leaders in south Berkeley by renaming local parks, streets, or spaces to honor their legacy.

Build a community park in the Arts & Cultural district of South Berkeley with funding from a bond measure to encourage cross-cultural interactions, cultural diversity, and inclusion, bringing all colors of people to the green space.

### **2. Make Communities More Accessible and Enjoyable For All**

Provide community spaces such as the Adeline Community Park and plazas within the Ashby BART development to encourage community gatherings and involvement.

Encourage visitation of the Adeline area, arts & cultural district, and Ashby BART by implementing the two-lane option to slow traffic for safer and more convenient access.

Increase the density of housing in the Adeline corridor to create a vibrant mixed-income and mixed-use neighborhood, creating a viable business environment with opportunities for everyone.

Provide more outdoor recreation for girls and older residents, such as foursquare, chalk art and jump rope for girls, and tai chi and card tables for the elderly.

### **3. Dismantle Historical Racism and Inequity Through Reform**

Call for a \$100 million investment in the South Berkeley community (\$50 million immediately and the remaining \$50 million in five years), which will be used to subsidize low-income housing and housing for the homeless at the Ashby BART.

Provide educational resources and technologies for schools, as well as training programs for job certifications for the formerly incarcerated.

Address the obstacles faced by black business owners and the hurdles of unfair credit treatment, discriminatory loan enforcement practices, and high start-up costs. Offer reduced city-imposed application fees for business start-ups. Establish a business development program to bring entrepreneurs from the flea market to their own brick and mortar shops.

Utilize bond measure funds, such as U1, Measure O, and Measure P, to address the discriminatory practices in housing and the disproportionate effect on African Americans of rising rents and home prices, as well as predatory lending practices and redlining.

#### **4. Protect Vulnerable Residents From Housing Displacement**

Make the emergency rental assistance fund available to everyone.

Provide non-profit organizations with immediate access to the emergency rental assistance fund to improve their ability to support the housing needs of tenants facing immediate eviction.

Cap increases in property taxes for long-time elderly residents and create a home repair program to assist with refurbishment projects for the elderly on fixed incomes.

#### **5. Welcome Displaced Residents to Return to Our Community**

Establish right to return for residents who have been displaced from South Berkeley.

Provide those with proof of previous residence the right to qualify for affordable housing units.

Give preference in the housing lottery process 1) to South Berkeley residents and 2) to people who work in South Berkeley.

#### **6. Increase the Efficacy of the Housing Trust Fund**

Ensure that the Housing Trust Fund is used as a dedicated funding stream for benefiting low income housing development. Earmark HTF funds to be used in the same community where the in lieu fee was originally collected.

Establish a vacancy tax on residential spaces to increase funding to support tenants facing immediate eviction.

Increase the current in lieu fee of \$38,000 for opting out of producing affordable housing on site, to a suggested rate of \$50,000 (adjusted yearly to account for the Consumer Price Index, CPI).

#### **7. Create Permanently Affordable Home Ownership and Non-profit Owned Rental Housing**

Allocate a significant portion of the Housing Trust Fund to Community Land Trusts, Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives, and Mutual Housing Associations to guarantee the units are affordable in perpetuity and provide increased opportunity for ownership housing.

Support Community Land Trusts and Mutual Housing Associations in their mission of maintaining below market-rate housing.

Advocate for housing that is affordable for low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income (homeless) individuals for stronger and more resilient communities.

Allocate funding to non-profit owned resident service programs that lead by example, providing food distribution, medical visit transportation, health solutions, and Covid emergency services.

#### **8. Support Small Landlords and Property Owners**

Create a training program that offers landlords effective resources for selecting tenants and how to be responsible and compassionate landlords.

Create a complementary training program that offers tenants effective resources for how to be responsible and compassionate tenants.

Incentivize landlords to accept section 8 housing vouchers by creating a program of incentives:

Cover security deposits and the cost of damages to a property.

If the tenant vacates the lease, provide one month's rent.

Waive city permit fees for repairs and improvements.

Clarify the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) planning process by reducing the fees and requirements needed for development to be approved. Make a simple handout presenting various modular options from \$200,000-\$500,000 to streamline the process by clearly laying out designs, costs, and timelines of completion in advance. Change the term from ADU to “backyard homes and guest spaces.”

### **9. Provide Free Internet for South and West Berkeley**

Bring in accessible free internet, potentially through non-profit housing organizations, with funding from the city and the Board of Education.

Carry out a study to determine whether the San Francisco approach, where the city operates through a private company, is appropriate.

Work with the school district (especially Longfellow Middle School and Malcolm X Elementary School) to launch a pilot project for creating Internet access for all.