

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

Candidate Name: Rigel Robinson

District / Office being sought: City Council, District 7

1. Berkeley is required to adopt an updated Housing Element by January 31st, 2023. This Housing Element lays out the city's plan for new housing construction through 2031, and must ensure the city can meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of ~9,000 homes.

Please discuss your approach for using this Housing Element as an opportunity to address Berkeley's housing crisis:

- a. How would you achieve Berkeley's RHNA target?
- b. Where should these homes be built?
- c. How would you fund ~4000 low & very low income affordable units called for in the RHNA, given currently high construction costs?
- d. What is your view of the ~5000 market rate homes called for in the RHNA?

The housing crisis is the defining challenge of our time as a region. Our years of notoriety for resistance to new housing are behind us — Berkeley is now leading the nation in ending exclusionary zoning and densifying transit corridors. In my first term, I introduced legislation to extract more money for affordable housing from developers and end single-family zoning in Berkeley. In my next term, I look forward to working to maximize the quantity of affordable housing units at our BART station projects and approving a Housing Element that brings greater density to our transit-rich neighborhoods, and brings key “missing middle” housing across the city. Berkeley is demonstrating for cities everywhere how to plan for growth while putting equity first.

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?

On the City Council, I have fought for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, advocating for policy changes and funding to accelerate our construction of complete streets infrastructure. Together, we have advocated for projects to improve public transit service across the city and here on Southside, and beyond. As a commissioner on the Alameda County Transportation Commission, I push for safe streets projects and programs at the regional level and seek to bring key grant monies to Berkeley. Bus rapid transit, bike lanes, pedestrian infrastructure, ferries, and more — these are all critical approaches to reduce our dependency on automobiles, minimize our emissions, and fight climate change.

3. Regarding City Council votes on Berkeley's housing crisis:

- a. For incumbents: What is a vote you're MOST (or LEAST) proud of regarding Berkeley's housing crisis in the last four years. Briefly describe the issue, why you voted the way you did, and what you think now about that vote.
- b. For new candidates: 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.

Hard to narrow it to one! We've been busy. I'll say our first Missing Middle item in 2019, which preceded our votes to end exclusionary zoning in 2021. We changed the narrative and established clearly that every neighborhood, even our most exclusionary corners of the city, will have to do their part to alleviate the housing crunch.

4. Regarding City Council votes on the climate emergency:

- a. For incumbents: What is a vote you're MOST (or LEAST) proud of regarding a climate or environmental issue faced by the Berkeley City Council in the last four years. Briefly describe the issue, why you voted the way you did, and what you think now about that vote.
- b. For new candidates: 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.

Voting to put this year's Bond Measure on the ballot — this measure has the vision and scale to deliver on so many of our most important climate projects.

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 must complete our bicycle and pedestrian plans, and plan beautiful car-free neighborhood centers and commercial districts to make it possible for more residents to live in this beautiful city without automobiles.

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.

Berkeley has recently resolved to eliminate exclusionary zoning throughout the city, and is developing new rules to allow small multiplex buildings (2-4 units) throughout R-1 and R-2 zoning. However, this still does not allow for mid-rise apartment buildings, and hence affordable housing, in traditionally higher income neighborhoods. The current draft Housing Element currently plans for most new housing to be built along Berkeley's most heavily trafficked and polluted corridors: San Pablo, University, and Shattuck Ave.

Do you believe the City's current plans are sufficient to address Berkeley's history of segregation? If not, what would you propose?

Hard to say anything would ever be "sufficient", the process of reckoning with our racist history is ongoing and will never truly end. That said we are making some major strides. Addressing the diversity we have lost in this city will take more than just zoning reform — we must ensure that long-time residents have the opportunity to safely and affordably age in place and ensure that those families that have been priced out of the city over the years be able to afford to return.

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 a believer in the notion that it is past time for the state to adopt a sort of "managed retreat" approach to wildfire safety. There are areas where it is simply not safe to be building new construction. However, this is deeper than just the number of units on a parcel. A new single-family mansion in the hills may have as many residents and create as much combustible material as a multifamily building of the same size. That said, I am often worried that fire risk is at times being manipulated to discourage new housing from being built in wealthier neighborhoods. Hillside Fire Zone 2, for example, is an expansive designation that covers much of East Berkeley, including neighborhoods where new multifamily housing is not only appropriate, but urgently needed.