

Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Alex Sharenko

District / Office being sought: Berkeley City Council District 2

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?

My approach to Berkeley's housing crisis would be ensuring we are building new housing for every income level. Berkeley is a diverse City, which is one of the reasons I love living here, but to remain a diverse City we must build a diverse array of new housing typologies. We should be building 6-10 story buildings downtown, 4-6 story buildings on our transit corridors that respect the context of the neighborhoods they border and "missing middle" housing like duplexes and quadplexes in our neighborhoods. We must additionally use Berkeley's Measure O funds to prioritize the construction of new subsidized affordable housing. As a commissioner on Berkeley's Housing Advisory Commission I helped write a plan for the City and BUSD to partner together to build housing for Berkeley's teachers to keep these essential members of our community in our community.

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

I have spoken at City Council meetings to advocate for the construction of new homes, I have served on Berkeley's Zoning Adjustment Board where I voted to approve the construction of new homes, I have written op-eds that have appeared in Berkeleyside advocating for the construction of new homes and I was a founding member of Berkeley Neighbors for Housing and Climate Action and served on its Steering Committee until resigning to run my City Council campaign.

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?

Our housing crisis and our climate crisis are inter-related as the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Berkeley is from transportation. To fix this we need to encourage public transportation and make walking and biking safe, viable forms of transportation whether you're 7 or 70. And to make these forms of transportation viable we need to build infill housing that allows us to make necessary investments in public transit, such as Bus Rapid Transit, and helps

nit together our neighborhoods to make essential amenities and services accessibly by foot or bike. We also need to make the necessary infrastructure investments in complete streets and bus-only lanes to prioritize modes of transit other than personal car use. To fully eliminate fossil fuels we need to move towards full electrification of our buildings and transportation and encourage renewable energy sources in the City.

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

I have advocated for new housing and helped elect City Councilmembers that support new forms of housing including “missing middle”. I have also volunteered with Walk Bike Berkeley multiple times to form human protected bike lanes to advocate for improved bike infrastructure.

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?

The most important housing vote Council took in the last 4 years was the vote to study how Berkeley can implement “Missing Middle” zoning. These naturally affordable housing typologies would allow Berkeley to build more affordable housing and undo some of the damage caused by past downzoning and explicitly racist redlining policies meant to keep parts of the City exclusionary. I would have enthusiastically supported it if on Council and if elected I will support the work needed to change Berkeley's zoning to make “Missing Middle” housing legal again in Berkeley.

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?

There were several extremely important environmental or climate votes over the last 4 years, including the vote to ban single use plastic foodware, a policy I helped move forward while serving on the Zero Waste Commission, but the most important environmental or climate vote was to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with BART to begin the process of building housing on the parking lots of Ashby and North Berkeley BART. Land use decisions are climate decisions and converting parking for thousands of private cars to homes for people directly adjacent to electrified public transit has the potential to positively change people's commuting behavior and reduce greenhouse gas emissions for decades into the future. I would have voted to support the MOU with BART.

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?

We can continue adding homes while reducing total greenhouse gas emissions by making smart investments in infrastructure such as complete streets to make biking and walking safe and convenient and by locating homes near transit such as on the North Berkeley and Ashy BART parking lots.

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?

To truly embrace diversity, we have to build all types of housing for all types of people. And we have to eliminate areas that only allow single family homes, the most expensive type of housing. Many of these areas were specifically created for exclusionary purposes and the only way to truly embrace a diverse future is to allow the types of naturally affordable homes that permit a socioeconomically diverse community to thrive, e.g. small apartment buildings such as those that can be found in much of District 2 already.