

Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Sophie Hahn

District / Office being sought: District 5 Councilmember

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 would address the crisis the way we have been addressing it at Council these past four years - by increasing housing in Berkeley across the board, with a strong emphasis on housing affordability. I served six years on the Zoning Board and have now served almost 4 on Council. In that time, I have approved thousands of units of housing in Berkeley - mostly market rate, but thankfully quite a few affordable units as well.

I support the increased density we already have on our corridors and downtown, and we are starting to see more and more projects take advantage of that. Six or seven stories is the most economical way to build (other than single or two story walk-up, but that doesn't provide enough units) as it's the maximum you can do with wood-frame over concrete podium. It also happens to be a height most people find pleasant - it's the height of most buildings in places like Paris and Barcelona.

Many projects are going in on San Pablo Avenue, and many have been built or are under construction on University and downtown, on Shattuck and in other areas. There are many more projects in the pipeline. In addition, I voted for CM Droste's item to explore upzoning traditional single family areas (which now, with new ADUs laws, can already have multiple units) to up-to four-plexes. My district has a lot of this kind of low to mid-density multi-family housing and it melds well with the neighborhoods, retaining a "residential feel" while providing more units overall.

I am glad you asked about the RHNA targets, because Berkeley has already far surpassed its RHNA targets for market rate housing, with double or triple the number of units approved and/or built than allocated. The real logjam has been around affordable housing and meeting or exceeding our RHNA goals, and that has been my strongest focus these past for yours. I wrote a progressive affordable housing plan for Berkeley with an aspirational goal of achieving 30% "protected" affordable housing by 2050. This would be housing protected by a variety of means - rent control, traditional not for profit affordable projects, inclusionary housing, housing owned by land trusts and managed cooperatively, more section 8 type subsidies, especially long term subsidies for very low income people - formerly homeless, disabled, etc. - who aren't likely to be

able to keep themselves housed over the long run without support, etc. And it would mean housing at all levels of affordability, including middle income.

To get more affordable housing, we have done all of the following, with my strong support and/or leadership:

- (1) increased the inclusionary requirement from 10-20%
- (2) increased the affordable housing fee for those who don't include affordable units on site
- (3) strengthened rent control
- (4) allocated more funds than ever to housing retention services, including money for rent support for people at risk of losing their housing
- (5) wrote, placed on the ballot, ran the campaign for and passed the largest bond in Berkeley's history (Measure O, \$135M) - for affordable housing, and a companion measure, P, for funds to rehouse the homeless and provide a few years of housing subsidy, fund the "support" in supportive housing, and for other services for the homeless. (I wrote the measure with the Mayor and CM Harrison, and co-chaired the campaign to pass it)
- (6) started a robust community process to move forward on housing at Berkeley's BART stations, and advocated strongly for the highest amount of affordable housing possible.
- (7) broke ground on the Berkeley Way Project - with Measure O monies - Berkeley's most important affordable project in decades, and supported an affordable senior project at Oxford and Cedar, worked on a land trust acquisition (still in process) of a building on Solano Avenue in my district, and moved forward on other affordable projects coming forward to take advantage of Measure O monies, and allocated money to the City's Small Sites program.
- (8) wrote and passed items to expedite approvals of affordable projects and waive fees (both authored by myself)

All of these measures, and more, have set the City up to achieve more affordable housing than ever. I advocated strongly for a \$200M bond and was disappointed that we did only \$135M, as I felt that amount would be even more beneficial to the City, and was possible to get passed. As it turned out, we got over 80% of the vote for Measure O, so I think we could and should have done more.

I support doing 100% affordable housing, at all levels (from very low to 120% of AMI) at our BART stations, and am ready to go back to the community for additional affordable housing bond monies for these projects. Especially in light of the fact that voters showed such enthusiasm for Measure O, I think we should put forward a visionary plan for massive affordable housing at those sites, and only reduce our aspirations if the voters don't join us. I think they will - this is a once in a century opportunity to greatly expand access to affordable housing in Berkeley, and I am ready to fight to make it happen.

We can add a lot more housing in our downtown and corridors, and we can get more units in existing low density zones while still maintaining a "residential area" feel that many people move

to Berkeley to enjoy. We can meet our RHNA goals with Measure O monies, leveraged up to 5:1 with County, State and Federal dollars, and with the additional inclusionary housing in market rate projects. I am also interested in looking at a Berkeley- specific density bonus for projects to produce more affordable housing. Moderate income housing doesn't get the same subsidies as low and very low income, so I would like to look at how to incentivize moderate income housing in market rate projects. We could reward that with bonuses. Dividing larger homes into two or three units, or adding units in low density areas, should also result in some units at lower cost than the existing larger homes, although there is no guarantee they will be at official "moderate" income levels. But certainly more within reach for many first time homebuyers, as well as working families.

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

I have taken leadership or been a strong supporter of all of the above.

4. What actions have you taken to support building more housing, affordable and/or market-rate, in your community?

I also covered this in my answer to the first question.

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?

I have been a leader on climate and environmental measures since taking office, and was proud to be recognized across the world for my first-in-kind anti-plastics legislation. For many years, as a community advocate, I worked to bring Community Choice Energy first to Berkeley, and when the previous Council showed no interest, to Alameda County. It was the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition Community Choice Working Group that brought the concept to the Supervisors, and got Scott Haggerty to take up the matter. After being elected to the City Council, EBCE came into existence and I served as alternate, with the Mayor, on the Board. Joining EBCE was the single most impactful measure ever taken by Berkeley to reduce our Carbon emissions - and somehow it went by largely unnoticed! With 100% clean or renewable electricity available to every customer in Berkeley, building-based emission can be (and were) dramatically reduced.

In addition, I convened a year-long process with green building professionals, and co-wrote the Berkeley Deep Green Building Initiative, a blueprint for deep green, non toxic and ethically sourced buildings. <https://www.sierraclub.org/san-francisco-bay/blog/2016/08/berkeley-buildings-go-deep-green>.

Since the launch of East Bay Community Energy, and improved requirements for green/energy efficient buildings in Berkeley, GHG emissions from buildings have gone down. The next step, with regard to emissions for buildings, is to get rid of harmful natural gas. This was part of the Deep Green Buildings legislation, and CM Harrison's item to ban use of natural gas in new

buildings, which I co-sponsored, has further helped buildings in Berkeley reduce their carbon footprint. In the future, we will need to phase out gas in existing buildings as well.

As a result of all this progress on reducing emissions from buildings, transit now accounts for the majority of Berkeley's GHG emissions. Transit is the next big frontier in meeting our Climate Action goals and becoming a zero carbon City. We need to make biking and walking the primary modes of transit in much of Berkeley, improve public transit, and transition all vehicles to electric. When you charge your car on a clean energy grid, now available thanks to EBCE, your transit emissions go way down. These are the best next steps for us to further reduce emissions and achieve the goal of an 80% reduction in GHG emissions as envisioned by Measure G.

Additional important strategies that Berkeley needs to invest in more intentionally are carbon sinks and planting of additional trees, particularly in West Berkeley which has poor air quality due to proximity to the freeway. Preserving and enhancing green space and green roofs is important to our climate goals, and urban agriculture helps too, by reducing the "food miles" embodied in the food we eat. The average supermarket item travelled 700 miles to reach the shelves; that's a lot of GHG emissions being "eaten" every day. We can't asphalt, build and cement up our community and still meet our GHG reduction goals - we have to include green spaces and local food production as well.

Reducing VMT and transitioning to alternative modes of transit is key to reaching our goals, as is making housing more accessible to transit. Much of Berkeley is relatively flat and well suited for bikes to be the primary mode of transit. I support expanding our protected bike networks and going beyond – to close one lane of bicycle boulevards and give over a whole lane to two-way bike tracks that provide real protection for cyclists, and would invite a much broader spectrum of residents to ride bikes. The current safety profile of biking in Berkeley isn't strong enough for "average citizen bikers" to use bikes as their primary mode of transit. This must be addressed.

In addition to biking, walking of course needs to be encouraged and made safer for all. With the current collapse of public transit in the face of COVID-19, we will have a great deal of work to do to rebuild and support meaningful public transit. Bus lines in my district will likely be cut, leaving my constituents, most of whom live in hilly areas far from commercial districts, few choices other than driving. Public transit must also join the 21st Century and adopt models like VIA in New York City, where the "bus line" is created in real time, based on demand from customers. Carpooling must be improved and telecommuting institutionalized to reduce commuting.

I strongly support development of both of Berkeley's BART stations into new affordable neighborhoods, placing more people on top of transit. I also support reducing parking to zero for buildings within a radius of major transit, in particular buildings built adjacent to BART. Developers like to put parking in "Luxury" buildings and should not be allowed to park them at anywhere near a 1:1 ratio when next to transit. Two of the recently proposed downtown Berkeley developments a step away from BART were fully parked, something I opposed.

Last but not least, Berkeley needs to create incentives for people to purchase electric vehicles that can be powered by 100% clean energy from EBCE, and build-out electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and the City's own vehicles need to transition to all-electric as soon as feasible vehicles can be obtained (can't find all electric garbage trucks yet, for example). When people do drive a vehicle of any kind in Berkeley, they should be driving zero emission vehicles.

Ultimately, to be a fossil fuel City, we need to move everyone to 100% renewable energy through EBCE (currently EBCE can't supply that much of this category of energy, so we'll have to wait a bit for that to be available), and to encourage more local solar as well. We need to get rid of natural gas. Then, we need to move ALL vehicles to electric, charged by clean energy, and get most people out of their vehicles and onto bikes, walking and public transit.

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

I am and continue to be an environmental leader on the Council addressing GHG emissions, plastics, championing Urban Agriculture and green buildings, addressing toxics, water conservation, and more. I am the immediate past Chair of the Sierra Club Northern Alameda County Group. I received an award from the Ecology Center "For Service to People and Planet."

Since (and prior to) being elected, I have led on legislation and initiatives across a broad spectrum of environmental issues. I authored first-in-kind legislation to end the use of throwaway plastics in Berkeley, which was widely covered by national and international press, and has been used as a model across the globe. Currently, I am in discussions with the office of the Mayor of Paris, where they are considering how to adopt similar programs. As stated previously, I co-sponsored Berkeley's groundbreaking legislation to ban natural gas in new construction, starting the process of ending use of damaging natural gas in Berkeley. I also co-authored Berkeley's Climate Emergency Declaration with Councilmember Davila.

Also mentioned previously, prior to joining the City Council in 2016, I had worked many years as an advocate to establish East Bay Community Energy and convened a year-long process to write a far-reaching plan for the greening of new buildings in Berkeley, entitled Berkeley Deep Green Building Initiative. The program was adopted by the City Council and includes goals such as ZNE buildings, reducing embodied energy, greywater and other water catchment and recycling, ensuring building materials are non-toxic, and ensuring fair trade/ethical purchasing to avoid materials made using child labor, or otherwise environmentally or social irresponsible materials.

Finally, I wrote Berkeley's urban ag laws as a community member and expanded them as a member of the City Council. I am the founder of an urban farm and CSA, The Berkeley Basket, which is in its 10th year of production. We provide locally grown, organic, zero-mile produce to 20+ families on a weekly basis throughout the growing season. Urban Agriculture is another GHG reduction strategy, that has many other benefits as well!

There is much work to be done, but I am very proud of the work I and other environmental leaders on the Council have accomplished in less than four years.

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?

Hands down the most important actions I have taken on housing were to co-author and get passed measures O and P. Voting to put them on the ballot, and then voting for them to pass (in the general election), are two votes I am extremely proud of! It's not enough to have good ideas and aspirations; you have to find the MONEY to make your programs and plans realities. These two measures are making affordable housing and rehousing of the homeless a REALITY in a big way for Berkeley. Four years is a very short time to make this much happen. Much has been put into place now, and we've just begun funding and breaking ground on affordable projects, and working to rehouse the homeless. In the next four years, I feel confident we will see a lot more affordable units and other results we can *all* be proud of.

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?

This one is very hard. We have done so many important and worthwhile things on the environment and climate. I think I'll have to say it was the passage of my own Single Use Foodware and Litter Reduction Ordinance. It's first in the world. I spent a year writing, consulting, adapting, and building support. Hundreds of people came to Council to speak in favor of the measure. It was covered by national and international press. The LA Times wrote an unsolicited editorial. It's a big step forward for Berkeley, and a model being replicated across the region, country and world. It was a huge lift and is having a huge impact, here and beyond. I continue to be asked to speak at conferences, receive delegations, consult with governments - including the Italian Parliament's Zero Waste Committee and the office of the Mayor of Paris. I certainly still feel excited and proud about this achievement.

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?

Build more housing near transit, transition homes to ZNE and get rid of natural gas, expand biking, walking, and public transit, encourage electric bikes and, when necessary, vehicles, and bring more alternative and clean transit options to existing homes.

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?

Under current circumstances, where African Americans and other people of color are disproportionately low income, the most important thing we can do through our housing policy is to FOCUS ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, and that is what I have been doing, with a deep commitment and many concrete, impactful actions taken. In addition to needing to produce and protect huge amounts of housing affordability, I think we also need to make sure affordable housing is available in all neighborhoods, and diversify the kinds of affordable housing available - both rental and for purchase - to ensure that family-friendly housing is produced as well as the smaller "efficiency" units for couples and singles that are being produced in large numbers. All of the policies I have supported on the Council move us in this direction.

Another important policy is to STOP DISPLACEMENT. We have fewer and fewer African Americans in Berkeley, but we aren't careful enough with the kind of housing we allow to be built in traditionally African American neighborhoods. Gentrification has huge displacement effects; I think housing built in middle and lower income neighborhoods, which is where we have concentrations of African Americans, should be affordable to people who already live in that neighborhood - which reduces displacement. I also believe in self-determination; we should be asking African Americans what kind of housing and improvements they would like to see in our community for themselves and their families, not making assumptions on their behalf.

Beyond this, we need a concerted redistribution of wealth to make up for centuries of exploitation of African Americans and other people of color. That, plus ending both overt and covert redlining (like real estate agents not showing people of color housing in predominantly white neighborhoods), would ultimately make all neighborhoods "affordable" to people of all backgrounds. That is why I support reparations, and am interested in looking at how we could make a reparations program work in Berkeley.