

# Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

## 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** Wayne Hsiung

**District / Office being sought:** 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?

The solution to the housing crisis is to build housing, and lots of it. On the current Mayor's watch, Berkeley has fallen woefully short in the construction of very low income, low income, and moderately low income housing. While the city is on track with above moderate income housing construction, the fact remains that housing costs are soaring. The Mayor can do much more to address the crisis. And I will, by providing unequivocal support for both affordable and market-rate housing projects.

On my watch, Berkeley will explore sensible opportunities to increase housing density. We will not consider banning apartment building construction, as the current Mayor has done. We will collaborate with state leaders on a shared vision for transit-oriented development and push for immediate construction of hundreds of units of affordable housing in areas like the Adeline Plan area, rather than accepting a slow phase-in of affordable units. Most importantly, we will pass an 'ultra-millionaire' wealth tax to generate revenue for the construction of affordable housing.

A convoluted building approval process has slowed down housing construction in Berkeley for too long. While seeking win-win solutions for the community, we will set clear deadlines and standards for construction and ensure that the housing stock grows.

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

I have been a 20 year climate-activist and an environmental law professor, and I have pushed for green housing as an academic and activist. I volunteered in the housing projects in Chicago two decades ago, and that experience instilled in me an enduring sense of the importance of 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?

We're in the midst of a climate catastrophe, and Berkeley has an opportunity – which I will take as Mayor – to be a leader in addressing it. We should set a net zero greenhouse gas emissions timeline of five years, guided by leading climate and renewable energy scientists. Three things need to change in order to get us to that objective: a solar panel on every roof, an electric stove and heat pump in every home, and electric cars and shuttles on every road. I intend to finance this transition through a tax levied on high net worth individuals, a gross receipts tax imposed on corporations grossing millions (similar to Prop C in San Francisco), and a use tax levied on luxury apartments and mansions.

Moreover, the fight against climate change includes challenging cruel factory farms. I will support efforts to end factory farming by establishing a “right to know” in Berkeley for how food is produced and take measures to transition our system of food away from climate-destroying agribusiness and toward a sustainable system of food production (including, eventually, plant-based and lab-grown meat). I propose a \$100 million investment into a Green District in the Telegraph area where solar panels and community gardens replace roads, new businesses are certified green and plant based, and old businesses receive support to phase-out climate-destroying practices over a one-year timeline. The Green District will model what our economy of the future must look like and, hopefully, inspire not only the rest of Berkeley, but cities all over the world.

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

As a community organizer, I have mobilized thousands of activists to stand up against factory farms and fossil fuel companies. We need the same mentality in office. I've also represented numerous green companies in hundred million-dollar solar financings and other transactions as an attorney. Many of us believe in a vision of a radically more eco-conscious community, and I have the technical expertise to bring us together in realizing it.

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?

In February 2017, the Council denied a use permit to develop three new homes at 1310 Haskell Street, even though the Zoning Adjustments Board had approved a use permit for the project and the state court had ruled against the city for previously denying a permit for the project. This Council vote signaled to housing advocates that Berkeley city leaders were not prepared to support multi-unit construction in the midst of a severe housing crisis. The vote wasted unnecessary time and public money on legal fees while the Mayor should have been focused on addressing housing affordability. The Council's decision was not best. If I had been on Council, I would have voted to issue 1310 Haskell a use permit, as recommended by the Zoning Adjustments Board.

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?

In 2018, the Council voted to place on the ballot an advisory measure supporting a 30-year plan for resilient and sustainable infrastructure to address climate change, known as Vision 2050. The best climate scientists say we have about 10 years to reduce carbon emissions if we hope to stave off the worst effects of climate change. Meanwhile, other cities – as well as the entire country of Norway – are moving faster than Berkeley in the transition to renewable energy and a circular economy. At Berkeley's current pace, we will address climate change no faster than Shell Oil company, which also targets 2050 to reach zero emissions. The Council's decision was not best. If I had been on Council, I would have pushed to go carbon free in five years. By setting ambitious goals that might seem unachievable, and working incrementally to make real progress, we will lead Berkeley to a better future.

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?

Building around transit corridors is crucial, as in ensuring all new construction uses electric rather than natural gas heating. In the long term, we need to move towards a fully electric system of transit, powered primarily by solar.

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?

Reforming zoning laws so that wealthy neighborhoods are not exempted is crucial. So too is ensuring that zoning, planning, and code enforcement are free from racial bias. Our campaign has been working closely with residents who have been harmed by racial bias in our city's housing policies – such as Leonard Powell – and we believe in speaking directly to the families affected to ensure that our city's processes are just ones.