

# Berkeley Neighbors for Housing & Climate Action

## 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** Richard Illgen

**District / Office being sought:** City Council, District 6

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?

- Reserve publicly-owned housing sites for affordable housing. This includes the Ashby and North Berkeley BART stations.
- Help community-based nonprofits and land trusts acquire existing buildings for long-term affordability, particularly in areas where housing is difficult to build.
- Permit ADU's in locations where appropriate (for example, where such additional units would not exacerbate parking problems on narrow streets so that emergency vehicles cannot navigate the streets).
- Prioritize building market-rate housing on sites where the land costs would make solely affordable housing infeasible.
- Participate with other cities in acquiring sites and buildings for affordable housing.
- Require inclusionary zoning and/or in-lieu fees for new market-rate development and get the maximum number of units permitted.
- Encouraging UC to build student and employee housing.
  
- Avoid further displacement. It is far less costly to have residents stay in place rather than moving to a new home. This can be achieved by:
  - Providing at-risk tenants with rent assistance, in addition to help with defending against unwarranted evictions.
  - Providing at-risk homeowners with mortgage assistance and encouraging lenders to forbear or recast mortgages.

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

Much of my life has been dedicated to providing and preserving housing, particularly affordable housing in the East Bay. For ten years, I was the Executive Director of a nonprofit housing development corporation that built and rehabilitated affordable housing and ran a job training program for unemployed persons. I worked in concert with legal services to make banks that were redlining communities where people of color lived and made those banks lend in those communities. As a Supervising Deputy City Attorney, I frequently pushed back against bad actors, including putting a substandard SRO into receivership and forcing its sale to a nonprofit

housing corporation for permanently affordable housing, and writing one of the strongest ordinances in the country to reign in the big banks, so that tenants could remain in place and requiring the banks to keep up their foreclosed properties. During the 2008 financial crisis. I was one of the leaders in bringing rent control to Berkeley and chaired the inaugural Rent Board and later chaired the Planning Commission. I was one of the authors of the Fair Chance Ordinance and assisted in drafting the COVID rent and emergency moratoriums.

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?

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines in Berkeley. Council should not have turned down the Telegraph Avenue BRT proposal. One of the prime BRT sites is San Pablo Avenue, as a line could run from Oakland through Western Contra Costa County.
- Berkeley currently requires an energy audit for properties being sold. Just like with upgrading sewer lines, Berkeley should require some energy efficiency upgrades at the time of sale, performed either by the buyer or seller, and if by the seller funds, place funds in escrow to ensure completion.
- Require new developments to reach NetZero or at least Leed Platinum with the requirement that a developer show why the project could not meet these standards – and requiring an in-lieu fee if it can only meet lower standards, similar to the in-lieu fee for affordable housing.
- Encourage the use of electric vehicles by installing more electric charging stations. Some cities have electric car chargers at street parking locations. One of the energy upgrades for houses being sold should be outlets for electric car chargers. Parking garages should be required to have solar electric vehicle chargers. In the case in which a retrofit would be too costly, autonomous mobile car chargers are in development or are already available that could be used so that a car could be charged anywhere in the garage.
- Make solar, whole house storage batteries and level 2 electric car chargers less expensive to install by reducing fees. Encourage more homeowners to install solar by allowing solar to provide power during outages. Most solar is tied to electric lines, so that when the power grid goes down, so does the solar.
- Make the use of individual mobility devices (such as electric bicycles) safer. Make more charging facilities available for individual electric mobility devices, particularly in the UC campus area, to make students more likely to use them.
- Convert the City's automobile fleet to electric vehicles, including police and emergency vehicles. Electric vehicles now have ranges beyond 300 miles, so cars can go all day on a single charge. The City of Fremont currently uses electric cars as police vehicles.

Berkeley has the opportunity to start this process, but the Council majority, including the District 6 incumbent, declined to do so.

- Bus shuttles taking people to BART stations, to the UC campus, and to major corridors such as Shattuck and Solano. For years, Oakland has operated a downtown shuttle running up and down Broadway, mostly paid for by merchants.

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

I have not been in an elected position to take any of these actions on a broader scale. But while running nonprofit housing development corporation in the mid-70s, we included early solar on the houses we rehabilitated whenever we could.

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 looming Council action in housing is the development of the Ashby and North Berkeley BART stations. I support building only affordable housing on the BART sites. Berkeley is behind in creating affordable housing, and these are prime sites owned and controlled by public entities—BART and the City.

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?

About 18 months ago, the Council missed a golden opportunity to begin converting the City vehicle fleet from gas-powered to electric-powered parking control vehicles. Instead, the Council majority, including the District 6 incumbent, voted to purchase gas-powered replacement vehicles. This will delay the conversion of these vehicles for at least 7 years and up to 14 years, the life of the fleet being replaced. Had I been on Council, I would have either

voted to purchase the electric vehicles or only leased the gas-powered ones on a yearly basis so that the city could readily convert when the electric vehicle technology and options improve.

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?

- Require all new housing to include adequate level 2 electric car chargers in parking areas.
- Include safe parking for micro-mobility vehicles.
- Build on or near public transit. If built away from public transit, provide shuttle buses.
- Require new residential buildings to be built to NetZero standards, or at least Leed Platinum.

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?

- Provide more affordable housing.
- For affordable housing, give a preference to persons who previously resided in Berkeley.
- Prevent further displacement with rent control and restrictions on evictions, particularly those tied to COVID, including loss of income due to the pandemic. Assistance for mom-and-pop landlords and homeowners is also necessary.
- Use rent and mortgage assistance to keep people in their homes.
- Assist nonprofits and land trusts to purchase existing housing and taking it off the speculative market.