

**Berkeley Progressive Alliance
Candidate Questionnaire
Nov 2016 Election**

Name: Ben Gould

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Candidate for what office: Mayor of Berkeley

Campaign Web site: www.bengould.org

(Please limit your responses to questions 1 ,2 and 3 to 325 words total)

1. Why are you running for mayor / city council?

I believe in the promise of Berkeley – a city of equal access to opportunity, of diversity of thought, of leadership in social justice and sustainability. However, in recent years, we've struggled to live up to these values, and City Council has not displayed the leadership needed to overcome them.

2. Why do you think you'd make a good mayor / council member?

I'm a graduate student at UC Berkeley earning dual master's degrees in public policy and environmental engineering. I'm the Chair of the City's Community Environmental Advisory Commission, and representative on the Graduate Assembly (and member of the Budget, Sustainability, and Green Initiative Fund Committees). I have five years of leadership experience and have worked at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and the International Council for Clean Transportation, volunteered in a Congressional district office, and served on the board of Engineers for a Sustainable World, a national nonprofit. I was born and raised in Berkeley.

With my experience, I bring a unique perspective to City Council. My background in engineering and policy analysis gives me a problem-solving approach to policy making – I identify and define problems before proposing solutions.

3. What are the key issues that the City Council should address?

1. Housing affordability. Right now, only the wealthiest can afford to move to Berkeley. Council must do more to ensure people of all incomes can move here. That means building housing to support them, or we sacrifice our values of inclusivity and diversity.
2. Reinvesting in parks, infrastructure, and historic buildings. We have over \$200 million in deferred maintenance and capital improvements, due to structural deficits that the Council has repeatedly failed to address. It's time to fix this problem – let's either pay for the parks and services we want, or find ways to reduce our maintenance needs.
3. Leadership in social justice and sustainability. We've fallen behind when it comes to enacting new policies that represent important steps forward for society. I'm interested in expanding housing-first approaches to

homelessness, reforming policing, phasing out natural gas heating, developing a strategic citywide green infrastructure plan, and modernizing our bicycle infrastructure.

4. Do you support the Berkeley Progressive Alliance mission statement and progressive agenda?

I strongly believe in the BPA's mission statement, support the sentiment and intentions behind the progressive agenda, and agree with many of the specifics of the progressive agenda.

a) Is there anything you would add? Yes

What would you add?

I would add progressive taxation to pay for many of the values and ideas expressed, including affordable housing, homelessness services, improving infrastructure, and incentives for environmental efforts. I would also add providing more housing near transit, so that there are places for people to live who can't or choose not to drive.

b) Is there anything you would **not support**? Yes

Which Items would you not support?

I elaborate more on my resistance to some of the affordable housing funding proposals later on. I don't support using existing taxpayer money to provide free charging to people already wealthy enough to own electric vehicles, or providing large subsidies to homeowners to install renewable energy without clear benefits. I think there needs to be more rigorous analysis on the impact of raising the minimum wage well beyond \$15.

Housing:

5. Do you support The Berkeley Progressive Alliance's Affordable Housing Platform?

I support the intent and values behind the Berkeley Progressive Alliance's Affordable Housing Platform. I think there might be more effective and impactful ways to achieve the stated goals in line with the progressive mission and values.

6. Do you support our proposed funding sources for affordable housing?

I like the direction of the ideas proposed, but I think some of the specific proposals are flawed.

a) Is there anything you would add? Yes

What would you add?

I would add a progressive tiered supplemental transfer tax of 0.25% (or something between 0.1% and 0.5%) on properties sold for more than 50% of national median new home price, and dedicate all of that additional revenue to affordable housing – generating more revenue than the plan to allocate 25% of excess TT revenue to affordable housing. I would add a parcel tax to pay for affordable housing – \$0.05 per sf would bring in \$4+ million annually, as much as

the business license tax plan. I would require homeowners with large yards but no accessory dwelling unit to pay for a use permit, and use that revenue to fund affordable housing (with a fee waiver for households that can demonstrate financial hardship) – an innovative and novel approach driven by the same values as the short-term rentals tax, of wanting people to provide more housing.

b) Is there anything you would not support? Yes

Which Items would you not support?

I would not support allocating 25% of excess property taxes to the HTF – I don't think we should pit parks & infrastructure against affordable housing. I would not support increasing the fee to \$34,000 – Council has already reached an agreement on that, and I think we can find other approaches to get 13% more money into the HTF. I do not want to support the other two options – I don't think we should be discouraging people from visiting Berkeley or becoming landlords, but I could support them as part of a package deal.

7. Will you commit to **supporting the candidates for Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board** chosen at the Tenant Convention on April 24?

I plan to support the candidates chosen at the Tenant Convention.

Ballot Measures:

8. Will you support the **ballot measure to increase the Berkeley minimum wage** to \$15 in 2017 and provide paid sick leave? I definitely want to provide paid sick leave, and I'm interested in raising the minimum wage, but I want to see more research and evidence to support this approach. I'm not sure how the "livable wage" number was reached, and it doesn't seem like it's designed to accommodate a varying cost of living – for example, if we're successful in making housing more affordable, presumably this would lower the cost of living. I also want to see more work done with other cities around Berkeley to move forward in this way too – I'm concerned about changing our plans so soon (even though I may not agree with the current plan) and how this will impact how everyone is planning for their future.

9. Will you support the **ballot measure to increase the business license tax** paid by landlords with five or more units to pay for affordable housing, with an increase sufficient to generate \$4 million a year? Yes

Info here: <http://www.fundaffordablehousing.org>

10. Will you support a **ballot measure to implement public financing** of local elections for Mayor and City Council? Yes, absolutely

Info about this proposed initiative:

[http://records.cityofberkeley.info/Agenda/Meetings/ViewMeeting?id=178
&doctype=1](http://records.cityofberkeley.info/Agenda/Meetings/ViewMeeting?id=178&doctype=1)

See Item 12, with supporting documents in the April 5 Council agenda.
(Please limit comments, if any, to 75 words on questions 9, 10 and 11)

11. Berkeley has a rich history of being a community that is economically and racially diverse. What do you think the city could do immediately **to stop the displacement** of African-Americans and other people of color? (Please limit comments to 75 words or less)

Firstly, prevent active displacement by enacting strict limits on demolitions, and provide additional support and resources for tenants fighting eviction orders. Focus these resources in communities of color.

Secondly, ensure that enough new housing is built so that wealthy newcomers don't displace (or replace) longtime low-income residents when they try to live here. Build the housing for the wealthy in areas where it won't disrupt low-income communities, such as in North Berkeley and the hills.

12. How will you campaign in your race?

- a) If you run, will you **knock on doors** and talk to voters? Yes
- b) Will you **call and e-mail people** and ask them to contribute money to your campaign? Yes
- c) About how many **hours a week** would you devote to campaigning between Labor Day (Sept 5) and Election Day (November 8)? 30-40+