

**Candidate Questionnaire for City Council District 4
Special Election: March 7th 2017**

Candidate: Ben Gould
Website: www.bengould.org
Email: ben@bengould.org

1. Housing:

High on the list of social concerns is the critical lack of affordable and low-income housing in Berkeley.

a. What can the city council do, and what do you propose to do, to promote housing for Berkeley's low income and middle class people?

Berkeley faces two main challenges when it comes to housing for low- and middle-income people:

1. Protecting the availability of existing low-priced housing, and
2. Ensuring the creation of new low-priced housing.

To protect existing residents in low-price housing, Berkeley should maintain its strong tenant protection and rent control laws, and a vigilant Rent Board well-equipped to support tenants.

We must also ensure we create new low-priced housing so individuals and families seeking to move to or within Berkeley are able to find a place to do so. This means we need to build more housing, and ensure it will be affordable to those of modest means.

- We can require builders to include affordable units (or pay a fee), and incentivize the creation of additional affordable units.
- We can find sources of funding, such as those from Measure U1, to subsidize nonprofit developers' construction of affordable units
- We can have the City purchase (or construct) housing and ensure it is rented at affordable rates.

In addition to all of the above, we can also allow both for- and non-profit builders to build smaller, cheaper units (anything from tiny homes to shipping containers to micro and prefab units) that help lower costs and provide more housing for the same price. We can also reduce barriers to approval and construction for affordable housing, such as parking and design requirements, to help projects get approved more quickly.

b. What has worked and not worked so far?

Our strong inclusionary housing requirements have proven successful in creating limited numbers of new, below-market-rate units and generating millions of

dollars of money for the affordable housing trust fund. However, to meet our Regional Housing Needs Allocation for low- and middle-income housing with just inclusionary units, we would also need to build 7,500 units of market-rate housing. Clearly, inclusionary units will not suffice to meet our needs, and additional sources of funding are needed. Measure U1, while helpful, only provides enough funding for a handful of units, so other sources of funding are needed, such as a supplemental transfer tax, transient occupancy tax, or parcel tax to raise additional money for affordable housing.

2. Homelessness:

Many people are at risk of becoming homeless especially with the high cost of housing. Already over 900 people in Berkeley are homeless.

a. What could the City Council do, and what would you propose to do to improve services and provide shelter and housing for the homeless?

We need a navigation center with 24/7 access, and storage lockers placed throughout the city to ensure homeless residents are able to find a place to stay and keep their belongings out of the weather. We also need to ensure housing for the homeless is built and made available, complete with supportive services, possibly as a community benefit from a larger project or as part of the affordable housing funding available from the countywide bond measure or measure U1 funding.

b. What could be done to prevent homelessness and displacement?

Homelessness and displacement can be prevented by ensuring housing is available to people who want to move here, preventing landlords from raising rents and ensuring newcomers don't force someone out. We can also help prevent homelessness by providing services to help people stay in their homes – everything from tenant protection and rent control laws to emergency loans for rent and security deposit obligations.

c. What can be done to improve relations between the Police Department and our homeless people?

The Police Department should ensure it is not harassing homeless residents, especially long-time residents, and recognize that the obligation to protect and serve extends to all residents, regardless of housing arrangements. Additionally, facilities (like a 24/7 navigation center and storage spaces around the city) should be created so the police can help homeless people get to and utilize those facilities, rather than simply being forced to relocate around the city at odd hours.

3. Police Accountability

We've received reports of, and observed Berkeley Police harassment of the homeless, people of color and the young.

a. What can the city council do, and what do you propose to do, to improve police relations with the community?

Berkeley Police should always be held accountable for their actions. We should ensure our police are trained to treat every citizen with the respect and consideration they deserve, and to follow our belief of innocence until proven guilty in a court of law. I support requiring body cameras and dash cams to be used to provide a nonbiased record of events, in addition to protections for citizen reporters, and a strong Police Review Commission able to review issues and complaints as they arise.

I believe community relations can be improved through everyone – citizens and officers alike – knowing the police will be held accountable. I also believe that having regular officers patrolling consistent beats and getting to know the people in the area will further help improve relations, so community members know the officer in uniform is a person behind the badge.

b. What types of training should be required of Berkeley Police?

Anti-bias training should be required to combat societal tendencies towards institutional racism and prejudice. I also believe it is important to ensure they receive training in recognizing and managing mental health issues (enough to keep a situation calm until mental health professionals arrive), as well as training for how to manage crowds, protests, and riots without resorting to unnecessary force. I also believe the police should prioritize non-violent and non-lethal practices at all times.

4. Given the Oakland warehouse fire:

a. What could the city do about / for renters living in commercial warehouses and other spaces not zoned residential?

First, the City should ensure renters do not face the risk of losing their homes due to circumstances beyond their control. Nobody should be penalized for finding housing accommodations that they can afford. However, landlords should be held accountable for ensuring any housing provided is safe for anyone living there.

Second, the City can send building inspectors to identify potential sites and work with landlords and tenants to ensure the locations are made as habitable as possible in an affordable, timely fashion. Landlords who cooperate and facilitate safety improvements should have fines and penalties reduced or waived.

Third, we should ensure housing is available for renters living in otherwise unpermitted spaces, to help them find better, safer, healthier accommodations that they can still afford as soon as possible.

b. What should the city do about unpermitted inlaw, basement and garage units?

The city should identify existing units and send inspectors to work with the owners to ensure these unpermitted spaces are safe and habitable. Again, owners and landlords who cooperate should face reduced or waived penalties. Tenants should be protected, and permitting for new units should be streamlined to reduce the incentive to create illicit spaces.

5. Alta Bates Hospital

What could the City Council do, and what would you propose to do, to prevent Sutter Health's planned closure of Alta Bates Hospital?

We should do everything we can to keep Alta Bates open. We need to understand the full costs of retrofitting the existing building, including potential cuts to service during the retrofitting period, and impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. Then, we need to sit down with Sutter to negotiate and identify potential funding sources, from state-level funding opportunities to local bond measures. We should also explore alternatives, such as building a new, modern, full-service hospital and emergency room elsewhere in Berkeley and repurposing the site for another use (like affordable or student housing) to understand our best alternative option in the event of failed negotiations.

6. District 4

What suggestions do you have for issues and problems in District 4?

We need to ensure that Downtown continues to grow as a vibrant, thriving place with diverse stores and residents. We should continue the Downtown Plan and support new opportunities for businesses, culture, and homes in the Downtown Area.

Additionally, we need to ensure our parks, infrastructure, and historic buildings are well-maintained. I want to ensure we use Measure T1 funding to help repair our public resources in District 4, and find additional sources of funding to make further improvements. I plan to work with local businesses to expand access to public open space (like parklets), and with AC Transit, BART, and BikeShare to improve transit and biking access and safety throughout the District.

a. What can the city council do, and how do you propose to support small businesses in Berkeley?

The City Council can work with small businesses to ensure small business loans are available and affordable; permitting applications are manageable; parking requirements and regulations are reasonable, fair, and beneficial; and that both affordable commercial and residential spaces are available for new companies and their employees.