

## **Housing Santa Cruz County 2024 Candidate Questionnaire - Christopher Bradford**

***There has been a pattern for supervisors to applaud housing projects in other districts but not always in their own if there is any opposition, and/or a general attitude that most housing should be built in Santa Cruz since that is where the jobs are. What criteria would you apply to deciding whether to support a project located in your district?***

I would choose to support a project in my district based on if it meets the needs of the surrounding community. The fifth district is exceptionally low on needed housing, as the recovery from the CZU Fires has been extremely limited during a time of expensive building prices and low inventory. I am generally extremely positive toward building, as increased housing density and availability would help to solve a number a big of big problems for the people of the 5th district. I would also, for larger developments, emphasis the importance of a significant number of affordable homes being built of part of the project. In a big part of the fifth district it is important to remember that the high density housing that most think of the solution to housing is just not possible. So we must work on getting folks solutions that work for their communities such as tiny homes, ADU's and CZU Fire rebuilds streamlined and accessible in a timely manner.

***In the last five years have you attended a Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors meeting to support or oppose a housing project?***

Yes, I absolutely have. I have attended many Board of Supervisors meetings to fight for CZU Fire families right to rebuild their lost homes in my district. I have also had one on one meetings with Supervisors Manu Koenig and Justin Cummings on creative and affordable housing solutions to combat our severe housing crisis.

***Did you attend community meetings, participate in the surveys, or make comments on the County's Housing Element?***

Yes, I have. I attended the North County Democratic Club meeting with the Mayor of Scotts Valley and had a private meeting with him as well. I have also reviewed the County's Housing Element when it was released to the public.

***Each district has its own needs, what housing/affordable housing challenges do you think your district needs to address, and how would you go about convincing the other supervisors to agree to it?***

The 5th district has a very large number of families who have lost their housing in natural disasters, and has also had many years suffering from an obstructive planning department. In many ways, these families are like the proverbial canary in the coal mine; there will be more natural disasters in the future, that will impact folks from \*every\* district, and the nearly impossible odds they face attempting to rebuild give us a preview of what every family in the county could face if they are placed in the same position. Policies and approaches that help the

folks in the 5th now will also prepare the county to make better decisions and have infrastructure in place to support communities all over the county in the future. Getting buy-in from the other Supervisors will be straightforward.

***Are there policies that make it harder to build housing in your community that you would like to change?***

Yes, there are many. Although its more a matter of changing the approach the county when it comes to building and rebuilding in the fifth district. Individual policy choices — like making folks rebuilding from disaster meet modern code requirements — can be obstructive, but that obstruction is a manifestation of the culture around building. That needs to change.

***100% affordable housing projects have a better chance of acquiring funding if the county funds part of it, land is one of the ways, but also cash funding. Would you support any of the following to provide funding: a parcel tax, a real estate transfer tax increase, or an increase to the TOT tax dedicated to housing?***

I don't generally prefer using increased taxes for this— we are in a moment when the cost of living in our county is extremely high, and many folks are struggling to make ends meet. I am definitely supportive of the idea of using county land to make those projects more feasible.

***Even though the county a few years ago working with the Housing Authority promoted landlords to consider Section-8 tenants there is still a long wait for housing units for those qualified. Do you have any ideas for incentivizing beyond what the program already provides, or any thoughts on how to encourage the program?***

Section 8 suffers from stigma; a marketing campaign explaining its benefits, and how it serves people just like them who need housing and are trying to survive in an extremely tough market, would be incredibly beneficial.

***Consultants report that 100% affordable housing projects usually need to be at least 50 units, and depending on lot size would most likely be 5 stories. There is a general community push against anything over three stories. Would you support a 100% affordable housing project of that size if it was on a major transportation corridor?***

Yes. We are far past the point where we have the luxury to let these primarily aesthetic consideration prevent us from building the density that we need. Building up is oftentimes the best choice for density.

***The new RHNA numbers in the Housing Element are daunting. Construction costs have escalated, and interest rates have skyrocketed. The state has a 68-billion-dollar deficit and the Federal government has done little for housing. What ideas do you have to incentivize builders to build housing in the unincorporated portion of the county rather than somewhere else?***

The key is to find creative ways to reduce risks and costs for developers while ensuring the community's goals around affordable, mixed-income and sustainable housing are also met. The right incentives can encourage construction that addresses our housing needs. Some of these solutions could be forming public-private partnerships with developers and non-profits to share costs and resources. We can also investigate providing low-cost financing, grants or subsidies to offset high construction costs. We can consider easing expensive permit requirements as well.

***Housing the homeless has been, and continues to be, a significant challenge. The strongest opposition to a project in recent times was the 35-unit Park Avenue supportive housing project. Cities like San Jose are working on finding locations for and creating villages using tiny homes. What ideas do you have for housing the unhoused -- supportive housing?***

Creating tiny home villages is a great idea; other areas have considered using unused buildings, including former commercial real estate, to create housing projects using existing inventory as well. I think we need to invest much more heavily in prevention; it's much less expensive and more effective to keep a person off of the street in the first place, when financial issues are the largest cause of folks losing their housing in the first place. I would love to see empty buildings repurposed into housing for persons in need.