

Housing Santa Cruz County 2024 Candidate Questionnaire - Joy Schendledecker

Most people in Santa Cruz say they are for affordable housing, but then they qualify it with not in my neighborhood. Since council seats are now by district, what criteria would you apply to deciding whether to support a project located in your district?

I would support projects in the district that comply with our General Plan and Objective Standards. I would also support ongoing community engagement via precinct assemblies (or similar) to help build support for and reduce opposition to development of underutilized parcels. I think leaders should facilitate cultural shifts towards socio-economic diversity in mixed neighborhoods.

Can you name a specific location in your district that you feel would be a good site for a housing project?

There are multiple locations along Mission Street that are already identified for development. I'd like to see the long-vacant lot across from Ferrell's donuts be used for affordable or mixed-income housing. Or the now-shuttered Burger, or the long-shuttered photo shop by Mission St. BBQ. I support the housing project across the street from the HR Block apartments.

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

There are already carriage-mews and small apartment buildings dotted throughout the district. I would support more quadplexes and small apartment buildings. I think the planning and permitting process for homeowners is very challenging, and building costs are enormous. Even with ADU streamlining and support, people will need \$500,000 to build one, and that's not the case for most homeowners. I support public banking, more wealth taxes and a property transfer tax dedicated to our Affordable Housing Trust Fund. We could subsidize all levels of deed-restricted home building, from ADUs to public and private affordable apartments with these funds.

In the last five years have you attended a Planning Commission or City Council Meeting to support or oppose a housing project?

Yes (to support)

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

Yes

What is your position and reasoning on the Housing for People initiative?

I plan to vote yes on M because it supports the Housing Justice principles of community control, affordability, inclusivity, permanence, and health and sustainability (Right to the City Alliance). That said, I have been open and honest that I would have rather been voting in a citywide Community Workforce Agreement, which I think would do far more for labor, environmental, and community protections.

Santa Cruz is the only jurisdiction in the area that met its RHNA numbers in the last cycle, and the only one to have acquired the ProHousing designation. What stands out to you in how that was accomplished that can be applied to the next cycle, and what additions to the new Housing Element do you feel will help the city meet its new RHNA numbers?

I think the most significant accomplishments have been around affordable housing, like the Cedar St. and Ocean St. apartments, and the planned Pacific Station North and South. I'd like to see the city do a better job at prioritizing public land for public housing (instead of selling parcels to for-profit hotel developers) and to continue to work with faith-based and community organizations to build affordable housing on their land.

Consultants, in a report to City Council, stated that a 100% affordable housing project usually needs 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, with that criteria, if it was on a major transportation corridor?

Yes

100% affordable housing projects need to have the equivalent of free land. There are few sites the city owns that are large enough for an affordable housing project. One is the existing library site. The city began the process of planning what could be built there and affordable housing was a common choice for those who participated in the survey. Would you support that site including affordable housing as a major component?

Yes

100% affordable housing projects have a better chance of acquiring funding if the city funds part of it, land is one of the ways, but also cash funding. The city's fund for that is nearly exhausted on current projects. What, if any, ways would you support to increase funding sources?

I think we'll get the most bang for our buck with a property transfer tax. A land value tax could also be helpful. I'd also like the city to support a Community Land Trust and Land Bank so that we can be adding to our people-owned property thus preserving and adding to our public housing portfolio.

Do you have any ideas that would increase incentives for developers to build in Santa Cruz instead of somewhere else?

The more we reduce inequality and increase wellbeing in Santa Cruz, the more pleasant and safe of an environment it will be for all residents and visitors. We don't get this from policing or gentrification, we get it through good wages, labor protections, investment in local businesses, funding arts and culture. Developers will want to build here because demand will be here. To incentivize mixed-income projects, we could use our now-plentiful Affordable Housing Trust Funds to provide grants for affordable units.

One of the new requirements in the Housing Element is Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. The Peace Village project is an example of what can be done, having low-income housing in one of the most affluent neighborhoods. Another example is the Dream Inn project that would have lower income units in the coastal zone that also has been an exclusive neighborhood. Do you have any ideas of locations or ways to meet the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing provisions?

I love the Peace Village project, and I like elements of the Dream Inn project. I think one of the best ways to create more mixed-income neighborhoods is through a Community Land Trust and Land Bank that operates throughout the city, supported by public banking. Another is to disincentivize vacant homes and illegal short-term rentals, which negatively impact community connections and housing availability. Third is to incentivize deed-restricted affordable housing. Transit corridors already have plenty of parcels identified, but I'd like to see smaller developments in every neighborhood (as I mentioned above).

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?

It's really unfortunate that class discrimination still exists, and I appreciate the Housing Authority's campaign to destigmatize renting to section 8 tenants. We need to keep doing that. A helpful program could be a cooperative rolling fund for first-last-security deposit payments. Producing more public housing and a community land trust would help relieve the pressure on that waitlist--I don't think section 8 can house everyone, given market and supply conditions.

Housing the homeless has been and continues to be a significant challenge. Three projects are in the works, Jessie Street under construction (50 units), an expansion of the Coral Street Harvey West with 120 units and the Housing Authority's 20-unit project at Natural Bridges. Cities like San Jose are working on finding a location for and creating villages using tiny homes. What ideas do you have for housing the homeless -- supportive housing?

Since it takes so long for brick and mortar projects to actually be homes for people, I think we need to do a whole lot of community work to find more safe camping and parking areas for people while they wait. Tiny home villages would be great, as well as public campgrounds and mobile home and RV parks. People do better in smaller, chosen communities. I think each district needs to self-organize to build consensus around several potential living spaces for people. They could be at varying levels of support and management to reduce barriers to entry, with an emphasis on shared stewardship of the property. Universal sanitation and waste management is essential, as well as ongoing integration into the area. Any potential nuisance can be managed, and will surely be less damaging and deadly than the policy of "preventing entrenchment" that we have now.

What do you feel voters should know about you to convince them you will be a strong advocate for housing/affordable housing?

I am a firm believer that housing is a human right, it is one of the foundations of Reproductive Justice. While I am highly critical of market-based approaches to solving our housing crisis (I think the market creates the crisis and has no incentive to solve it) and advocate for public housing and services, I recognize that we must work within the constraints of our political and economic ecosystem to build housing of all income levels.