

## Housing Santa Cruz County 2024 Candidate Questionnaire - Manu Koenig

***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?***

Will people be happy living there? Will it improve the neighborhood in any way?

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

On the Board of Supervisors I've championed the Sustainability Update, the largest change to the County General Plan in 25 years, as well as the Housing Element. I've also helped bring about improved METRO service so that we have more high quality transit stops. These changes are so profound that where we once were planning for a new car dealership at 41st and Soquel, we are now planning for affordable housing.

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

Yes

***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?***

D1 is a good place for more housing because of its proximity to jobs at places like Dominican Hospital and the Capitola Mall. We need to make sure that a good portion of the housing that gets built is attainable to our public sector workforce. I've worked closely with Supervisor McPherson on housing issues because of his interest in sustainability and passion for improving the planning process that was born out of the CZU Fire.

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

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The policy of reviewing every plan submission with excruciating detail such that even a single family home still takes 200 days to receive a permit. We need to radically shift the culture in our County Planning Department.

***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?***

No. Taxing some housing in order to make other housing affordable is a flawed approach. A parcel tax already failed county-wide because most people, including older homeowners, can barely afford to live here as it is. A transfer tax on luxury properties is the most feasible of these options, however, it's just going to bring down the total sales price of properties translating into lower valuations and lower property taxes in the long run. Our TOT was just raised and is quite high. We need to focus on eliminating some of the expensive restrictions that have made housing so expensive, rather than creating more through requirements and taxes.

***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?***

A referral bonus for section 8 landlords that refer other landlords. The biggest hurdle in becoming a section 8 landlord is the process. A current landlord is going to be the best person to convince another landlord to take the leap.

At the end of the day, the rents that section 8 will pay in our region are very good. We just need more section 8 vouchers from HUD.

***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

***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?***

I will implement ministerial permitting for affordable housing within the Urban Services Line - similar to ED1 in LA.

***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?***

I will pass a tiny homes villaging ordinance and transitional housing ordinance. I've identified at examples for the later from the City of Seattle. We also need to expand safe parking programs. Repurposing the Fire Camp on Empire Grade and investing in a behavioral health facility with neighboring counties are other options.