

## **Housing Santa Cruz County 2024 Candidate Questionnaire - Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson**

***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 use existing State and city laws/codes as well as the plans laid out in our newly revised Housing Element as guides. We have provided a site map and identified opportunity areas in our Housing Element that will help me and all councilmembers make decisions.

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

District three is mostly single family home zoning. There are small portions of Mission street in District 3 and if these are areas that have been identified in our site map (within the Housing Element), they could be considered. Otherwise, housing project focus for D3 would be on ADUs, Junior ADUs, and duplex/triplexes (SB9 and SB10 projects).

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

Yes, there have been policies in our community that have historically made it more challenging to build housing. While state laws have made important strides in addressing these issues, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done. To address this, we are actively implementing new policies and initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to housing construction, such as ministerial approval for qualifying housing projects, exploring the possibilities offered by SB10 and SB9, and streamlining the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) . We have named these in our new Housing Element. Currently the citizen led Measure M, should it pass would greatly threaten housing production (as was outlined in the recently released Impact Report).

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

I have served on the City Council for the past three years. I have supported and voted yes (final vote) on every housing project that has come before us.

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

In early 2023, I brought forward an agenda item to form a council subcommittee to work along side staff on the City's Housing Element. Myself, Mayor Keeley and councilmember Newsome were part of that subcommittee. We worked extensively to incorporate housing advocate groups'

(i.e. Housing SCC, COPA, YIMBY) feedback. We ended up with a strong Housing Element, supported unanimously by the council, and certified ahead of schedule.

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

I have endorsed No on M. It will greatly slow down the production of housing, doesn't solve for the height concern (that is at the core of the proponents argument), will result in less affordable housing (because housing won't be build), may result in loss of local control, and cost the city tax payers.

***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?***

The council in concert with city staff has been taking bold action over the last several years. We built a foundation with the development of the Housing Blueprint and with this roadmap were able to (for the most part) bring the community along. Key to these accomplishments were the strong partnerships with housing groups such as Housing SCC, Downtown Forward, YIMBY etc. We have developed a clear vision and direction in our new Housing Element that will help us meet our new RHNA numbers. This includes our site inventory/map; mapping out of opportunity zones; exploring implementation of existing laws (i.e. the REAP 2.0 grant), and having a vision developing high density neighborhoods (downtown expansion)-to name a few specifics. Again, community partnerships will be essential to the success of effective implementation of our Housing Element policies and meeting our new RHNA numbers.

***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 I would and I already have voted in favor of such projects while serving on the council.

***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?***

I would support the site for affordable housing as a component, and I know there is strong community sentiment to allow for other uses as well. One of the more popular proposals is to

permanently locate the Farmer's market to this location and consider a town commons. I believe we can achieve multiple uses for the existing site.

***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?***

Our city has a track record of success in obtaining grants, a trend we intend to maintain. Notably, we were among the 6% of jurisdictions in the state that met our previous RHNA goals, earning a Pro-Housing designation. However, we acknowledge that more is needed. I would support a city measure that explores parcel tax increases to bolster our local resources dedicated to affordable housing. Additionally, I have been, and will continue to advocate for directing revenues generated from the sales of city land/property into our Affordable Housing Trust Fund, further strengthening our commitment to affordable housing initiatives.

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

To enhance incentives for developers in Santa Cruz, we've already introduced Flexible Density Units (FDUs) to address challenges tied to acre density requirements. We can explore further adjustments like increasing the floor area ratio (FAR) for projects with 50% or more units featuring two or more bedrooms. Additionally, we've recently reviewed impact fees to ensure their relevance and impact, emphasizing the importance of these fees for funding vital community services. Rather than solely reducing fees, we can explore innovative approaches to boost resources and effectively address funding needs, making Santa Cruz an attractive choice for developers.

***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?***

We have identified opportunity zones in our new Housing Element as a key component of our efforts to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH). Additionally, we are actively pursuing the REAP 2.0 grant, which explores implementation of SB10 and would diversify housing types within affluent neighborhoods.

***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?***

I recognize that state laws aren't always followed when it comes to Section-8 applications. I have worked with the Housing Authority, COPA and State legislators to explore creative solutions. Collaborating with local stakeholders and engaging in public awareness campaigns could further encourage landlords to consider and participate in the program.

***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?***

I support all of these named projects. The City is working closely with Housing Matters to create a 'village' campus in the Harvey West area. The city of Santa Cruz is limited in sites so I have been working closely with some of my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to advocate for the development of such supportive housing throughout our county.

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

With over two decades of experience as a public health and social services professional in our community, I deeply comprehend the intrinsic connection between housing and health. Throughout my career, I've actively contributed to housing development and consistently supported housing projects with a 100% affirmative vote during my tenure on the City Council. My commitment to addressing housing issues is evident in the endorsement I received from Santa Cruz YIMBY in all three of my campaign efforts. I believe my actions and voting record reflect my unwavering dedication to fostering housing solutions in our community.