



GPLAC Candidate Questionnaire - Los Angeles City Council District 4 (March 3, 2020 election)

Link: <http://losangeles.cagreens.org/elections/los-angeles-cd4-questionnaire>

Dear Los Angeles District 4 City Council Candidate,

There are a range of important issues in this election -- and many questionnaires to respond to. As Greens, our party is often excluded from fair representation because of the nature of the U.S. single-seat, winner-take-all electoral system. As a result, while we care about a range of issues, we often focus on issues of fair representation and electoral reform in our questionnaires.

We look forward to your responses. We will publish them on our website and social media, and email them to our members in your district before the March 3, 2020 election.

Elections and Fair Representation

• How will you engage residents and ensure their voices are heard in the city's policy making process?

Throughout my campaign, I have held regular coffees and meet and greets throughout the district, at all different times of day -- I would continue that practice as an elected, and hold regular office hours, to ensure I was accessible. I would also insist that all calls and emails were answered in a timely manner.

As a constituent in this district, I have experienced the difficulty of getting a response to my concerns from my Councilmember's office -- and I have heard similar complaints across the district as I have campaigned. I am regularly blind cc'd on email strings to the Councilmember that stretch two and three years without resolution. Constituents are also regularly denied meetings.

As I've been organizing, I have told my supporters that our efforts don't end at Election Day -- after my election, I need them to keep showing up, not only to hold me accountable, but to send a message to the

other 14 Councilmembers that our concerns regarding housing, transit, and trees, are important, and central, to the City's agenda.

• What is your position on the size of the Los Angeles City Council and the use of ranked-choice voting for Los Angeles City Council elections? Please include a response to the Green Party's positions on these issues: <https://losangeles.cagreens.org/issues/los-angeles-city-council-size> and <https://losangeles.cagreens.org/issues/los-angeles-elections-ranked-choice-voting>

As an active member of the Los Angeles League of Women Voters, I am very supportive of ranked choice in City Council elections. And I do believe the number of Councilmembers should be increased -- serving 250,000 Angelenos makes it very difficult to provide effective constituent service.

• How well are Neighborhood Councils working? How might their role be improved? Do you see a role for Neighborhood Councils in conducting City Council candidate forums, as has been advocated by Common Cause?

<https://www.commoncause.org/california/democracy-wire/how-to-ensure-la-matching-funds-candidates-appear-in-town-halls-and-debates?>

I believe our Neighborhood Councils could be improved if serving on the Councils were more accessible to all Angelenos -- for instance, consistent evening meetings make it difficult for Angelenos with young families, or Angelenos who work nights, to serve, so we lose their voices. Meetings held at various daytime, weekend, and evening hours would help; so would simultaneous translation services, and childcare.

I also believe the Neighborhood Councils should be supported in doing better outreach to their constituents -- most Angelenos are unaware of the Neighborhood Council system, and I think a real field education program should be undertaken by DONE workers to spread information about the Neighborhood Councils from door to door.

• What is your stance on city councilmembers accepting money from developers and companies who frequently have business before the council? Did the ordinance the City Council approved in 2019 go far enough? How do you stand on the issue of behested payments? Is the Los Angeles system of public financing of elections sufficient or could it be improved - and if so, how?

I am personally not concerned about individual donations by Angelenos or LLCs which cap out at \$800 and are publicly disclosed -- in fact, I far prefer that the candidate, rather than the City, make explicit rules about what money she will accept or decline. In that way, the values of the candidate become clear to the voters. Nor do I have great faith that the City can police individual donors -- especially as the Councilmember in this race can't even manage that! (See: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-10/councilman-ryu-developer-donations> .)

Behested payments, on the other hand, are a far bigger problem -- soft money in politics is a scourge. That any elected can ask a donor to give any amount to a third party is particularly troubling, because it buys influence in two directions: the donor wins the good will of the politician, and the politician wins the good will of the third party. Considering we have rules on the political donor level about contributing in another person's name, I find it shocking that electeds can do it! The rules for elected officials should mirror the rules for Commissioners: they should not be allowed to solicit funds.

Finally: I believe the City Matching Funds program should be mandatory, and exclude the option to blow the spending cap. All candidates should have to opt-in to the program, and the spending cap should be set regardless of outside spending. This race, in this district, is a great example of that -- why is public money on offer for a Councilmember who has far outraised the spending cap? The playing field would be far more level if that were not allowed. (And as a taxpayer, I am extremely annoyed that my money is going to fund that campaign, as I can only assume the Councilmember is awaiting an Independent Expenditure campaign that will blow the spending cap, allowing him to spend the hundreds of thousands of dollars in excess of the Matching Funds cap that he has already raised!)

Public Bank

• How do you envision the public process to occur in determining how the Los Angeles Public Bank will be established? What values do you believe should be embedded in the bank once established?

In my opinion, Los Angeles Public Bank should have its focus in funding innovations in affordable housing, and providing capital to small business and nonprofits operating in the City. I am still unsure as

to how the Board of Directors should be selected, via commission or election -- I tend to lean towards election, as I would like voters to have direct influence over the operations of such an institution.

I am following the State's efforts to initiate public banking with interest, as well as Councilmember's Wesson's newest foray into the field. I am still unsure how to easily convince the voting public to establish a Public Bank, as it isn't the easiest concept to explain in a pithy manner, and no other city has managed to move from conception to reality to date.

Housing, Transit, Planning and Development

• What are the causes of LA's homeless crisis? How will you ensure that Los Angeles provides adequate housing options for residents and families of all income levels? What are the causes of gentrification and how can future growth be achieved without undermining existing residents and communities?

Homelessness increased 53% in District 4 since last year. This is unacceptable.

I believe that LA's homelessness crisis is fundamentally a housing crisis -- while mental health and addiction are part of the story, a city with sufficient housing stock would be able to house the majority of people struggling with those problems. We simply do not have the stock -- in fact, we are 500k units short countywide, and every income bracket is facing a housing shortage. Our low inventory has spiked the cost of housing across our city, and accelerated displacement and gentrification.

Twenty years ago when I moved to Los Angeles, I was able to find a \$300 apartment and work as a low-paid assistant at a television network. Today, Los Angeles has the sixth highest rents in the country, [with the median one bedroom costing \\$2300 a month.](#)

My Plan:

- Create more covenanted, deeded affordable housing so more remains on the market.
- Push affordable housing builders to the front of the line. Streamline the permitting process so affordable units can be rapidly and more cost-effectively built.

- Return to building small wood-frame duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes, which are the most affordable units that can be most quickly delivered to market.
- Simplify our general plans and building rules, so that projects don't need to constantly be asking for variances -- which in turn foster expensive, time-sucking lawsuits.
- Eliminate parking minimums on tran, so that housing units can be built for far less money.
- Fight the behested payment system, which essentially holds developers hostage to the expensive whims of elected officials -- it's legal racketeering, the costs of which are delivered back to the consumer.

Regarding gentrification:

I believe the housing crisis in LA, which started with California's Prop 13, and was compounded by LA's Proposition U, was accelerated further by the crash of 2007 / 2008. Homeowners were moved into a rental market that was already stressed out by decades of failure to build housing stock. The pressure of those homeowners into the rental market pushed traditional renters farther and farther to the margins as inventory got squeezed and rental prices pushed way upward. As that happened, we began to see waves of displacement, gentrification, and homelessness.

Add to that, decades of rent-control units slowly being reset to market level, and the expiration of affordability covenants across the county -- and BAM.

We haven't done nearly enough in the intervening years to address the inventory crisis in a serious enough way to alleviate that pressure -- nor have we done enough to protect tenants in place.

The best hedge against gentrification is to build enough inventory EVERYWHERE so that renters and homeowners can remain in place, rather than displacing renters and homeowners in other communities. Some gentrification is normal, but the speed and breadth of what we have seen here over the last ten or fifteen is completely the fault of our City Council, which abdicated responsibility when they should have been planning for sustainable growth.

It may be that underserved neighborhoods might require different rules than more affluent neighborhoods, for social justice reasons, as they have borne much of the cost of disinvestment in transit and green

space over generations. And we absolutely have to be careful to protect communities from the type of corporate housing raider-ship we saw in Inglewood, for example.

The best upzoning practice would be to take all of these things into consideration when creating new general and community plans.

• What was your position, if any, on state bills SB 50 in 2019 and SB 827 in 2018? Do you believe state legislation is necessary to help California cities address the state housing crisis. If so, what kind?

I do believe the state legislation is necessary -- thirty years of inaction here in LA, and the tens of thousands of homeless Angelenos, make that pretty clear.

I support SB 827, and I find much to like in SB 50's renter protections, mandates against hillside over-development (fire danger!), carve out for underserved communities a longer timeline to set their own rules, and focus on allowing small multi-family builds back into our city toolkit. Duplex, triplex, and fourplex housing is what makes so many of our neighborhoods quintessentially LA -- and they are the most affordable units to produce quickly, which allows builders to deliver them at a lower cost to market. This new draft of SB 50 is particularly encouraging because it gives municipalities 2 years to set their own rules to meet their housing goals before SB 50 kicks in -- that's fantastic, and allows our city to do the proactive thing, while also maintaining local control. So let's do that!

• What was your position, if any, on Measure S in Los Angeles in 2017? The Green Party position was to (http://losangeles.cagreens.org/ballot-measures/2017-03-07/no_on_s_los_angeles)

I was opposed. We are in a housing crisis. Ceasing all development is not an option.

• Regional land use and transportation planning is critical to liveability in Southern California. Yet the City of Los Angeles has not always vigorously participated in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). How do you see the role of the City of Los Angeles in SCAG?

We should be the loudest voices on housing development and transportation planning! My campaign platform is very much focused on housing and transit. I have already written about my housing agenda -- and I understand our housing plans to be inextricably linked to our transportation plans. We simply cannot continue prioritizing car travel by widening our roads and slashing transit services. Rideshare services have rushed to fill the void of a reliable public transportation system. Hundreds of Angelenos are killed in our streets by cars each year because of unsafe street crossings, crumbling sidewalks, and unprotected bike lanes. Meanwhile, our air quality continues to worsen, and the carbon we dump into the atmosphere while idling in traffic hastens climate change.

The solution to these problems lies in offering Angelenos more choice in how they travel.

My plan:

- Put a DASH route in every community in our district.
- Provide real-time arrival displays and shade at every bus stop.
- Prioritize convenient and accessible bus service across our city, by supporting protected bus lanes on streets that were built to accommodate streetcars.
- Shorten headways so that our bus lines are convenient and reliable at all times of day, and on weekends.
- Encourage more people to take our Metro rail lines, like I do, by advocating that Metro commit more resources to running more convenient and reliable service on existing lines.
- Improve rail station safety and support vibrant business corridors around them.
- Create a network of protected, segregated bike lanes. Protected bike lanes protect cyclists and scooter riders, and they keep drivers from the nightmare of injuring or killing someone riding a bike (or scooter). As a mom, I would be thrilled if I felt my kids were safe on their bikes -- bye-bye carpool!
- As we work to fix our sidewalks, rebuild them to allow for real tree cover, making walking a more appealing option.

I am proud to have the endorsement of Deborah Murphy, founder of Los Angeles Walks, Bike the Vote LA,, and The California Bicycle Coalition. [Read more about my plan for bike lanes and other mobility upgrades here.](#)

Investing in transit and mobility infrastructure will make our streets safer, our commutes shorter, clean our air, and slow climate change.

• As Los Angeles densifies by building more housing, the need for more open and green spaces increases. The Green Party views the sale of the South Central Farm land back to the prior landowner - and the subsequent approval by the City Council of a warehouse on its site -- as a loss of historic proportion to the community and to the nation as an example of community-based urban agriculture. How would you ensure that new community-based urban agriculture sites can be established and maintained?

I am very much in favor of community-based urban agriculture. In a city where so many people are one crisis away from homelessness, and so many children go hungry, urban agriculture is a very important tool. From a climate perspective, urban farming is also an opportunity to educate Angelenos about increasing plant-based foods in their diets, and weaning themselves from a reliance on heavy meat consumption.

Some opportunities I see for the establishment of these sites are on school grounds, and in our residential parkways. I have made trees and green space a central part of my campaign -- it makes sense to me that urban agriculture should be part of that plan. Funding could come through Parks and Rec, and through our new Tree Czar's office.

• What do you see the role of the City of Los Angeles in the long term re-purposing of the Los Angeles River; how can this occur without gentrifying away existing residents and communities?

The City of Los Angeles should prioritize recreation and ecological sustainability as we work to revitalize our river. I believe the river and its environs should allow for public space to congregate, to walk, and to cycle -- and to encourage the bird life and other wildlife to thrive.

The best way to ensure that these plans don't lead to waves of displacement is to work to build sufficient housing throughout the city, and prioritize park space and public space in every neighborhood, so that even as the river becomes more and more accessible and enjoyable, demand to live near the river can be balanced with the amenities of all our communities, making all our communities vibrant places to live.

• **How can planning for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles lead to increasing the long-term quality of life for residents and not lead to disruption and displacement of the most vulnerable?**

The most exciting thing about the 2028 Olympics is the transportation plans it has prompted -- I believe those projects are essential to the functioning of this city, and to taking significant climate action. As a regular Metro rider, I am very much looking forward to riding those new routes!

I understand concerns that the Olympics will worsen the displacement and mistreatment of our most vulnerable Angelenos, especially our homeless neighbors -- but those are problems we face already. We should be fighting to solve these problems now, long ahead of 2028, so that they need not be a concern then.

Some strategies we should take today, to help our most vulnerable, include:

- Establish safe camping and safe parking sites all over Los Angeles where we can provide bathrooms, mobile showers, mental health and addiction counseling, and connect people to Coordinated Entry Services.
- Enforce our ordinances to help maintain clean and traversable sidewalks.
- Build supportive housing, which is by right under California State Law, in every community where we currently see tents in our streets.
- Prevent Angelenos from becoming homeless by empowering the Housing and Community Investment Department (HCID) to more robustly protect tenants from bad landlords and spurious Ellis Act evictions.
- Explore development processes that keep tenants in place, such as: renovating around them, updating the building they are in, and then adding new floors on top, as is practiced in Israel and several other American cities.
- Continue to aggressively increase our housing stock.
- Help those struggling with mental illness and addiction with treatment actions informed by the County's new pilot program, based on how Trieste, Italy approached their mentally ill homeless population.

I am proud to have the endorsement of Katie Hill, former Congresswoman and executive director of PATH (People Helping the Homeless).

• Progress on Vision Zero and cycling safety appears to have stalled. What is your plan for increasing cycling use and safety in Los Angeles?

I have advocated to protect existing lanes at Neighborhood Council meetings, and spoke at the recent Die In on the steps of City Hall (after which I “died” on those steps with the other safe streets activists who attended).

I will champion Mobility Plan 2035, even in the face of negative public opinion because I am committed to making all streets in Council District 4 safe. I will not be deterred by a loud minority when it comes to making choices that will improve the community for everybody. If each community has a school, a business district, or a park, then we should plan for safe bike and pedestrian travel to, from, and around those places. These efforts will keep Angelenos safe and connected to their community. Increased foot and bike traffic in our communities is a boon to public health, mental health, and business, too.

To successfully build out a network of protected bike lanes, I will prioritize streets in the High Injury Network first.

I see Silver Lake / Los Feliz as the logical place to start. The existing road diet on Rowena has engendered some political support, which has, in turn, led the push for more improvements. By doing more work here, we will show the rest of the district, and the city, how much safer our streets can be.

SILVER LAKE / LOS FELIZ

- I'd extend the road diet on Rowena/Lakewood to Glendale Boulevard and Fletcher – this could be done without much disruption to traffic flow and would also connect the bike lanes on Silver Lake Blvd to Rowena (and ideally, to Atwater).
- The bike lanes on Silver Lake Blvd from Glendale to Van Pelt should be protected lanes. This easy improvement will reap great rewards in public opinion, which will allow for more work.
- I'd push for bike lanes on Glendale & Fletcher to the LA River Path (see 5A).
- Mobility Plan 2035 calls for bike lanes on Hyperion. The street may be too narrow to support parking-protected bike lanes, but we do need to connect the lanes on Rowena to Griffith Park Blvd. I will work with community stakeholders and city planners to see how we can make a safe connection on Hyperion.
- Re-paving Griffith Park Boulevard is also a priority, for cyclists and drivers alike.

- Once all these connections are in place, connecting bike lanes on Silver Lake Blvd to Glendale / Rowena, and to Rowena / Hyperion / Griffith Park Blvd / LA River Path, we will start to see a connected bike system.

MID CITY / MIRACLE MILE

- At the very least, the 4th Street “Bike Boulevard” intersections at Highland and Rossmore should get full traffic signals.
- Traffic diverters on some sections of 4th Street are also worth considering, not only to make the “Bike Boulevard” safer to bikes, but also as a hedge against cut-through traffic.
- Mid City West Community Council has been working on creating “bike friendly” streets, including Formosa Ave / Cochran Ave. I would strongly advocate implementing the \$2.3M Metro grant for Formosa / Cochran, which calls for full bike lanes, as quickly as possible.
- I am fully in support of a road diet on 6th Street between La Brea and Fairfax. (See 5B).
- Once we see 4th Street / Formosa / Cochran / 6th Street, again, we begin to see a connected network of bike lanes.

SHERMAN OAKS / TOLUCA LAKE

- Connecting cyclists to the LA River Path is a major priority in the Valley, as a way to connect to other communities.
- Mobility Plan 2035 calls for bike lanes on Ventura Boulevard. There are a lot of changes I would like to see to make Ventura safer, including those bike lanes, and connecting them to the existing lanes on Woodman and Riverside. I would also build out better-protected infrastructure to those lanes.
- Crossings should be installed to connect disconnected portions of the LA River Path, including on Kester between the riverfront trail and Ernie’s Walk.

Creating safe access by bike to the LA River Path will be a priority for my office. Regular cyclists demand it, and for many families, the LA River Path is a preferred recreational route, too.

I support a road diet on Glendale Boulevard that would add bike lanes, ADA compliant sidewalks, and a center turn lane. The center turn lane would improve traffic flow and safety for cars turning left onto Riverside; the bike lanes would not only connect to the River Path, but also connect Silver Lake and Atwater. As there is minimal parking along this stretch, I would push for the bike lanes to be designed as protected bike lanes, to keep families safe as they crossed to the LA River Path.

I am proud to have the support of Bike The Vote LA and CalBike. [You can read more about my plans here.](#)

Climate Change

• What does a 'Green New Deal' mean to you on the City of Los Angeles level - and how would you realize it?

We must act today, if Los Angeles is to have an environmentally and economically sustainable future. My entire platform -- housing density, transit (bike lanes and bus lanes), and a commitment to open space and reforestation in every neighborhood -- is about taking robust climate action in the face of our climate emergency, and it's jobs rich plan. My platform is inherently a "Green New Deal."

I believe that the most effective action we can take to address climate catastrophe are to build denser housing, build more transit, build wide sidewalks and protected bike lanes, and plant trees. Housing and transit will reduce vehicle-miles-traveled, and get more cars off the road, meaning less carbon getting dumped into the air. Trees will help draw down the carbon that's already there.

And all of those projects will generate jobs, and grow our economy, while ensuring we are taking robust climate action.

And we can get more creative! Solar panels on multi-family, mixed-use, and corporate housing. Gray water recapture. And doing as Berkeley has done, requiring electric appliances over gas in new housing builds, is interesting too.

Continuing to work towards a single-use plastics ban is also extremely important to me.

What will you do to preserve, protect and grow LA's tree canopy?

We need to grow our urban forest to cool our city and clean our air. I will fight to ensure our city follows through on its plans to aggressively reforest Los Angeles. Every family in CD4 -- and across our city -- should be able to access somewhere green within a short walk.

My plan:

- Reimagine our sidewalks by widening them to accommodate tree cover, so that Angelenos feel comfortable walking around our city.
- Rebuild sidewalks to “meander” around tree roots, when possible, rather than ripping mature trees from the ground.
- Partner with LAUSD to reforest their campuses. Tree cover will benefit our students, and the surrounding communities will benefit from the double duty trees do -- cleaning our air.
- Identify parcels of city property and work with private owners to deed pocket parks to our communities wherever possible.