

Carroll Fife

Oakland City Council candidate questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete The Oaklandside's 2020 election questionnaire. We understand we're asking a lot of you and your time, but we feel that Oakland voters deserve to know as much as possible about each candidate's views on major issues like housing affordability, homelessness, public safety, and more. We will be posting your answers to these questions on our website for our readers to see, and noting whether candidates chose not to respond. We are not endorsing anyone for office.

We'd like to receive your answers by August 28. Please briefly answer each question below using no more than 200 words. Please be as specific as possible when discussing policy ideas or positions you've taken, or would take, on different issues. Our reporters will also follow up with you for a phone or Zoom interview at some point.

Your name: Carroll Fife

City Council district seat you are running for: Oakland City Council District 3

We want to know more about you and the reasons you're running for council:

1. Please list your age, education, any professional licenses or other relevant credentials, your current occupation, and your neighborhood of residence.
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 - AA from Laney College (with courses taken at every single Peralta school); BA and education credential and Masters coursework from Holy Names University
2. Before running for City Council, how were you involved in local government? Have you served on any local boards or commissions?
 - I am very civically engaged. As a part of my day job as director of ACCE Oakland, and in my efforts to extract positive benefits for my community, I'm always at City Hall. From everything from Workforce Investment Board meetings to Committees and full City Council meetings - I've been a regular. I currently serve on the City of Oakland's Affordable Housing and Infrastructure Bond Oversight Committee.
3. What's your favorite restaurant or small business in your district—or somewhere you spend a lot of time? What's your favorite local park?
 - Oakland has so many amazing restaurants and small businesses. I can't choose one favorite! I love Cupcakin Bake Shop and Cosecha in Swan's Market and spend way too much money there. I also love Little Giant thanks to a friend that got me hooked on their bourbon pecan ice cream. In another life I would have been an artist and I love to spend time at the Joyce Gordon Art Gallery. I am in total awe of who she is and what she does. Right now however, I spend most of my time at home. My family used to go to the West Oakland Library and Little

Bobby Hutton Park every day. All my kids grew up taking swimming lessons at DeFremery Pool but we don't get outside like we used to due to Covid-19 and poor air quality.

4. Where can voters get more information about your campaign?
 - Voters can get more info about my campaign on my website, carrollfife.org and my social media accounts (all located on my website)

Homelessness and housing affordability are issues that many Oaklanders rank high on their list of concerns, regardless of what district they live in.

5. Tell us what you think the root causes of Oakland's homelessness crisis are.
 - I believe commodified housing is a huge core issue to homelessness and housing affordability. Allowing a competitive market to dictate the cost of living and shelter to the point where people are living on the streets while houses and high rises sit empty, should be criminal.
6. What specific policies will you advance to address the homelessness crisis?
 - Public lands policy
 - Taxes on corporate speculation and house flipping to fund homelessness services
7. When you think of the city's existing homelessness policies, what's working and what isn't?
 - Nothing the city is doing is coming remotely close to addressing the depth of the problem. It's challenging when to do so if one accepts certain housing "rules" as static and immovable. This results in just tinkering around the edges. We need broad, sweeping change with investment from the national, state and county levels. But we also need a shift in thinking about what is possible.
8. What are the root causes of Oakland's housing affordability crisis?
 - Commodification, speculation, racism, carnivorous capitalism, the Costa Hawkins Rental Housing Act, the power and influence of statewide lobbyists representing wealthy real estate and development interests, campaign contributions made by wealthy real estate and development interests and the Growth Coalition.
9. What specific policies would you advance to address the affordable housing crisis?
 - Statewide legislation to protect tenants in all forms of housing
 - A federal housing guarantee
 - Speculation tax
 - Inclusionary zoning
 - Recapitalization of the Permanent Affordability Fund
 - Investment in land trusts and other forms of community land ownership

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- Fund to assist struggling homeowners, particularly seniors, with support to maintain their homes and avoidance of predatory financial products like reverse mortgages

If elected, you'll likely have to balance the city's next budget, which has been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

10. What will you cut? Where will you find savings in the next budget?

- Police overtime and civilian-izable services in the department
- I would also work with my council colleagues to hire an independent auditor as a regular part of the budget process to ensure a transparent process for identifying cost savings opportunities.

11. How might you find new sources of revenue to help the city make it through tough times and grow in the future?

- There are sources of revenue in the city that are currently going untapped. Through work with Alameda County, I would work to make our taxation on unaccountable organizations more equitable.
- Internal audit
- A gross receipts tax on large corporations
- Support Prop 15

12. What will your budget priorities be? What services or projects will you ensure receive a growing share of the city budget?

- Housing and homelessness
- Small business supports
- Public infrastructure and transportation
- Environmental/climate justice
- The Black New Deal

There are three measures specific to Oakland on the ballot this year. Tell us briefly why you support or oppose each.

13. Strengthening the Oakland Police Commission and making it more independent.

- I support this. It's far overdue.

14. Allowing anyone 16 and older to vote for Oakland Unified School District directors.

- My last teaching job was at Emiliano Zapata Street Academy. I would love to see those students, and all Oakland high school students have the opportunity to vote on decisions that impact their lives. I was often in council chambers when the young people were there lobbying elected officials to support the measure. I have

been on board since they reached out to ACCE to endorse. I love this ballot measure!

15. Removing the \$1,000 cap on fines for ordinance violations.
 - Support

The City Council voted on some controversial and major policies over the past six months. Please tell us how you would have voted on the following, and what you think the next steps should be:

16. The council adopted the goal of reducing the Police Department's share of the general fund budget by 50% in the 2021-2023 budget.
 - The way this statement is framed may be confusing to people who weren't paying close attention to the actual process and council vote. In fact, it's a bit misleading. This is one of the reasons many residents don't engage in electoral politics - while the statement is true, it does not reflect the details of how a few council members adamantly opposed defunding the police and used every opportunity to obstruct the councilmembers who advocated for a proposal to reduce the budget by 25% THIS YEAR. A few members chose to ignore thousands of public comments and opted to kick the can down the road. So again, in the 2020 mid cycle budget, we had an opportunity to move funds from ancillary policing services to protecting small businesses or addressing the urgent needs of many Oakland residents who are struggling to pay rents and mortgages. I would have voted to do something about the impacts of COVID-19 THIS YEAR. I would not have postponed financial relief for Oaklanders to the next budget cycle.
17. The council approved a moratorium on residential evictions until the end of the COVID-19 emergency.
 - That council approved the moratorium drafted by my organization, ACCE Action, and with the hard work and organizing of community groups like the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Causa Justa, Centro Legal, EBCLC, the Oakland Tenants Union and the many individuals and organizations fighting to protect even more people from ending up living on Oakland's streets than are currently there. On council, I would clearly support legislation that I currently support on the outside.
18. The council strengthened rent control and Just Cause eviction protections and Oakland's Tenant Protection Ordinance.
 - Check out my answer to #17. It's the same for this.
19. The council rejected a plan to reform Oakland's business tax by changing it from flat tax rates to a progressive tax in which bigger companies with higher gross receipts would pay more.

- I've been working intently, for almost a year, on this legislation that would have put Oakland on par with many cities in the East Bay. Right now, homeowners carry a burdensome property tax load and this is completely unfair and unsustainable. I would have supported this plan to make big corporations pay their share of taxes to invest in a city that will desperately need new sources of revenue to address the impacts of Covid-19. Small businesses should not have to pay the same tax rate as multimillion dollar firms. We are fighting to make the tax structure fair on a state level through Prop 15 - Schools & Communities First Act; we need to do the very same on the local level.
20. The council voted to create a pilot program to send unarmed civilians to respond to nonviolent mental health crises, instead of the police.
- A study like MACRO is good, and a real working model is better. I am happy that the council is finally moving toward a more progressive approach to public safety. After all, we've been pushing for this type of resolution for at least five years through the ReFund Oakland Community and Labor Coalition at the direction of APTP. We don't have to reimagine policing because we dream daily what life would be like if we actually mattered. We analyze the conditions that would have to exist for us to be able to just "be". We organize to create a world where our skin and bodies are not a death sentence. It is those dreams, imaginings, planning, research, actions, marches, rallies and lobbying that has laid the groundwork for the progressive shifts happening today. It is because our people have not only imagined, but have actually put dreams to action by moving from the rhetorical to actionable, that so much research and data collection has been done to date. We do not wait for our hopes and dreams to be animated by elected officials and I am happy to see the mental health alternative proposed by Defund OPD fully operational in Sacramento and in Oakland under the name MH First. These are the paradigm shifts we need to ensure safety and wellness for everyone.

City Councilmembers reps will need to make big decisions on more hot-button issues in the coming year. How would you handle the following?

21. Should the city permit the A's to build a new ballpark at Howard Terminal in D3 or keep the ballpark in D7 near the Coliseum?
- The city should pass a comprehensive public lands policy that does not sell, but rather leases, land owned by Oakland's taxpayers. In the midst of a housing affordability crisis, many Oakland residents would prefer to lease land than sell it to a wealthy, private, Trump-supporting billionaire developer. I support good union jobs and keeping the A's in Oakland through a long-term lease of public land. We witnessed how years back, just *talks* of a deal at the Coliseum site created a wave of evictions and displacement of residents from East Oakland as property values shot up when everyone thought that Floyd Kephart would remake

the Coliseum site. I am deeply concerned about the shift in racial and economic diversity with the development of the stadium at either site because there is one constant when it comes to development in Oakland *and* throughout this country: it hurts Black people. Just look at the number of people pushed into homelessness. Who are they? Primarily Black people.

22. Should the city keep fighting the proposed coal terminal in West Oakland, or permit the developer to build it?
- The collective health and well-being of our community outweighs the wealth accumulation of a few individuals. This is a major problem with our culture: rabid individualism allows predatory and selfish actors to negatively impact masses of people in the name of maximum profit. I will fight for the environmental and personal health of the people, air, and land in West Oakland, District 3 and the entire city.

Tell us about how you'll improve public safety.

23. What's your approach to reducing gun violence? What specific policies or tools will you advance that will save lives? More police? More non-police services? Please be specific.
- Any approach must take root causes of violence into consideration. Community safety cannot be disconnected from self determination which is why economic and housing policies must be linked to public safety policies.
 - I worked with Councilmember Nikki Bas to defund OPD by 25% in the midcycle budget but four councilmembers blocked that effort with the tie-breaking vote coming from Mayor Schaaf. When elected, I will work with other progressive legislators at the local, state and federal levels to not only reimagine, but to implement concrete plans to redirect funds from racist policing agencies to city services, local nonprofit organizations, and essential, life-affirming areas that truly keep us safe. I believe a budget is a moral document that tells us what we care about and guides our expenditures accordingly. When elected, I will work to further divest from police by 50% in order to invest in what is life affirming. This will be greatly needed post-COVID.
24. Too many of Oakland's streets are dangerous for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. What policies will you advance that will improve transportation safety?
- We need to begin by recognizing that there are deep inequities baked into our transportation system. The people most taken advantage of by our economic system are the same people walking around in a pandemic and air quality disaster, without the safety of their own enclosed vehicle. As councilmember, I would focus investments on improvements to pedestrian safety first, recognizing that pedestrians are the most vulnerable users in our transportation system, in more ways than one.

How will you help Oakland workers and businesses thrive?

25. What specific policies will you advance to help Oakland workers who struggle with low wages, exploitative employers, and the uncertainties of the gig economy?

- See answer to #26

26. How will you help small and local businesses succeed, especially with the recession caused by the pandemic?

- Violence against Black people is not limited to police brutality and murder. It is carried out through our unequal and predatory housing, healthcare, education, and economic systems. As frontline workers such as gig workers, grocery and hardware store employees are being forced into life-threatening situations while struggling to pay inflated rents and as small business owners struggle to keep their heads above the rising waters of economic loss due to COVID-19, it is essential that the council address the needs of the most impacted first and adjust all expenditures accordingly. Rather than propose specific policies, I will be intentional about engaging with impacted communities to create policy proposals that will bring about systemic change focused around key areas proposed in the Black New Deal:
 1. **TAXING WEALTH:** Create equitable tax structures and end tax loopholes on the wealthy corporate class beginning with passage of the Schools and Communities First initiative (Prop 15) in November.
 2. **PUBLIC SAFETY:** Implement restorative, community based policy solutions for public safety and accountability by divesting from police and investing in community.
 3. **HOUSING:** Provide a home for everyone with hotel rooms and vacant units for all unhoused residents; reduce the looming eviction crisis by cancelling unpaid rent and mortgages during the COVID-19 Pandemic; and expand on innovative solutions for community land ownership and building of truly affordable housing.
 4. **EDUCATION:** Fully fund high quality education through college for all.
 5. **JOBS / LABOR / INCOME:** Ensure a \$15 minimum wage, paid sick leave, parental leave and fair scheduling for all
 6. **HEALTHCARE:** Implement Medicare for All, which includes physical and mental health care for all people