

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: Noel Gallo

City Council district seat you are running for: Oakland City Council District 5

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.

I am the Incumbent Oakland City Council Member for District 5. I have served Oakland as a community volunteer, organizer, resident, for my lifetime. I am honored that I have been elected by District 5 voters to represent them as an Oakland Board of Education Member for 20 years and as the current District 5 Oakland City Council member for the past 7.5 years. Over that timeframe, I have built strong community partnerships, expertise and have stayed committed to Building Community & Volunteerism; Economic Development; Better Schools & Public Safety. Based on my experience as an Elected Official, lifetime resident of the City of Oakland and having raised four children in East Oakland, and daily interaction with my constituents at the street and business levels, I am committed to action.

I am a lifetime resident of Oakland, East Oakland - Fruitvale. I have been married for 40 years; raised 3 daughters and one son. All graduated from Oakland Public Schools - Oakland High School and Fremont High School. I am proud to share that our family has graduates of UC Berkeley, University of Arizona, and Stanford, and graduate

degrees from UCLA and Santa Clara University. I live and represent Oakland City Council District 5.

2. Before running for City Council, how were you involved in local government? Have you served on any local boards or commissions?

I was elected by the voters of District 5 to serve as their representative on the Oakland Board of Education for 20 years, (1992-2012). I was elected to the Oakland City Council in 2012 and have served two terms to date (2013-present).

I have served on a number of community agency boards like the Unity Council, Spanish Speaking Citizens Foundation, La Clínica de la Raza, and others.

Additionally as the incumbent City Council member for District 5, I represent the City of Oakland on the National League of Cities, League of California Cities, Alameda County, AC Transit BRT Policy Committee, City-Port Liaison Committee and the Education Partnership 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?

All District 5 restaurants and businesses are my favorites! All District 5 parks are also important to me; because District 5 has one of the most dense neighborhoods of the City of Oakland and thus given the number of children and families, the District relevant to other areas, has less green space for recreation and sports. That is one of the reasons that I invest my time to beautify, clean and improve District 5 parks, especially for children.

4. Where can voters get more information about your campaign?

I am easily reachable - come out to our Community beautification efforts on each Saturday and Sunday (8:30 am - 12:00pm) and join me in removing illegal dumping, removing trash from our neighborhoods and business corridors to make District 5 a pleasant and safe location for children and families. My campaign website is www.noelgalloforoakland.com

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.

Root causes of Oakland's homelessness crisis in my opinion:

- **Limited Housing availability**
- **Family Support**
- **Economic, Education and Low Wages**
- **Social issues like drug addiction and mental health**

6. What specific policies will you advance to address the homelessness crisis?

Build more affordable housing as a priority.

Create more employment and training opportunities for Oakland residents

Provide additional wrap around services at sanctioned and sanctioned homeless encampments, trash removal services and stronger mental health services

I support the rehabilitation of underutilized buildings, like hotels, to convert to housing opportunities-but these establishments must have sufficient and strong community and health related services.

7. When you think of the city's existing homelessness policies, what's working and what isn't?

The establishment of Homeless encampments need better services programs, rules of operation and cleanliness standards.

Clear definition and support locations for homeless camps

City wide enforcement of rules and procedures for establishment, operation and tenant responsibilities.

8. What are the root causes of Oakland's housing affordability crisis?

The root causes of the national, state, county and local housing affordability crisis is related. Oakland, alone, can not solve this issue. Economic, Education, Development Entitlement & Building costs of construction, employment and permitting contribute to these issues. Oakland must work harder at the local level and the regional level to ensure that state and federal funding are provided for the rapid construction of affordable housing. Regionally each city must do their part and stronger state enforcement is needed.

9. What specific policies would you advance to address the affordable housing crisis?
Stronger federal, state and county funding and the stronger enforcement of the ABAG - RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment regulations is needed to ensure the region's compliance. This is not only Oakland's responsibility. I would also look at ways to expedite the production of new affordable housing development especially on surplus public property and more creative ways to convert underutilized buildings to housing opportunities especially for homeless, seniors and youth.

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?
Given the turbulent economic times and the continuing public health crisis, I would require regular and frequent financial presentation of funds available, to continually assess our priorities as a city - of course - public health, children and preserving businesses is important to maintain jobs, access to services and Oakland's resource tax base.
11. How might you find new sources of revenue to help the city make it through tough times and grow in the future?
New sources of revenue are through business retention to assist all of our businesses, hotels and other revenues to return to full operation most immediately. It is very difficult to expect that new taxes are appropriate at this time.
12. What will your budget priorities be? What services or projects will you ensure receive a growing share of the city budget?
My priorities are to invest in a clean, safe and healthy City - focus on economic recovery and job creation/preservation, housing and supporting education

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 was the co-Author to establish the Citizens Police Commission and made the motion November 3rd Ballot Measure that would strengthen the independence of the Oakland Police Commission by modifying the powers, duties and staffing of the Oakland Police Commission and the Community Police Review Agency and

create the office of Inspector General. As the Public Safety Chair, I am working with the Citizens Police Commission, OPD, Oakland Fire Department, and others to provide a more comprehensive public safety program. I have attended the Citizen's Police Commission meetings and I am accessible to all members of the Commission as well I attend District 5 NCPC (Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council) meetings to keep residents up to date on city issues, listen to their concerns and require my District 5 staff to attend these community meetings.

14. Allowing anyone 16 and older to vote for Oakland Unified School District directors.
As the incumbent District 5 City Councilmember, I voted to support this measure.

15. Removing the \$1,000 cap on fines for ordinance violations.
As the incumbent District 5 Councilmember, I voted to support this measure and I have signed as a Supporter for the Ballot Measure. I will be listed on the November 3rd Ballot as endorsing this Measure.

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.
I voted to support this goal. As the incumbent City Councilmember of District 5, I made the motion to support the allocation of City General Funds to establish the Reimaging Public Safety Taskforce. The purpose of the Taskforce is to invite the community to make recommendations on reconstructing Oakland's public safety system so as to increase community safety through alternative responses to calls for assistance, and investments in programs that address the root causes of violence and crime (such as health services, housing, jobs, etc), with a goal of a 50% reduction in the OPD General Purpose Fund (GFP) budget allocation.

17. The council approved a moratorium on residential evictions until the end of the COVID-19 emergency.
I voted in favor of the original and extended moratorium of residential evictions during the COVID -19 Emergency.

18. The council strengthened rent control and Just Cause eviction protections and Oakland's Tenant Protection Ordinance.

I supported the strengthening of Rent Control and Just Cause Eviction protections. I have also supported all affordable housing programs, home ownership programs and Just Cause Protection Programs. I have voted in favor of providing housing legal services support to low income residents facing housing discrimination and unfair treatment.

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 voted to establish a taskforce that is composed of community, businesses - large and small to present a plan to the City Council for inclusion on the 2022 Ballot. In my opinion, adding this proposal to the 2020 Ballot Measure was rushed and did not include the wide community outreach that a significant ballot measure should have. I do believe that it is time to review and update the City of Oakland's Business Tax System.

20. The council voted to create a pilot program to send unarmed civilians to respond to nonviolent mental health crises, instead of the police.

I was part of the Oakland City Council member group that worked together to work on a more equitable FY 2020-2021 Mid Year budget to ensure that City funding and thus services are targeted to these needy areas. The "Community First Budget" put forth by the City Council's Equity Caucus of Vice Mayor Reid and Councilmembers McElhaney, Gallo and Taylor, amended the Administration's proposed budget—augmented by \$37 million from the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act and \$3.6 million in anticipated FEMA reimbursement funding—to: Close a \$122+ million revenue shortfall caused by COVID-19; Redirect \$14.3 million from the Police budget to community investments; Prevent service cuts and pay cuts for City employees; and Invest an additional \$50 million to address significant racial disparities and provide relief to Oakland residents and businesses who have been financially ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession. This budget was balanced – the other proposed City Councilmember budgets were not.

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?

I prefer for the Oakland Athletics to build their new stadium at the Oakland Coliseum property and the remainder of the property to be utilized for mixed-use development including a range of housing types and income levels that will

benefit the surrounding community. East Oakland needs a catalyst anchor development to assist in job creation, housing and business opportunities. The City of Oakland has spent several million dollars in the Coliseum Area Specific Plan and Programmatic EIR - this investment should not be wasted. Additionally the Coliseum property and adjacent properties that are currently landbanked are public property and by law must be used for public good and benefit.

22. Should the city keep fighting the proposed coal terminal in West Oakland, or permit the developer to build it?

Yes – I oppose coal being shipped through or out of Oakland in all circumstances. I have endorsed and supported City Council legislative actions regarding this matter.

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. **The City of Oakland like many other communities, have realized that we need need to move towards a more comprehensive public safety program which is a comprehensive approach that continues to include direct policing services when required, but also more compassionate services that include restorative justice, mental health intervention, housing support and a strong wrap around community services approach given the social and economic issues our community faces. I also believe that cultural competent services and approaches are needed - Oakland has a very diverse community of many cultures, languages and values - it is important that we consider all approaches. I think it is important that my approaches to gun violence, tools to save lives are informed by the Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce.**

24. Too many of Oakland's streets are dangerous for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. What policies will you advance that will improve transportation safety?

The Oakland

While the City of Oakland has an updated and creative Pedestrian and Bicyclists Plan that encourages walking and biking to help with our dense neighborhood as well as conform to the Oakland Climate Action - the issue is that on all types of mobility and users - there is a need to educate and enforce laws to ensure public safety for all. Residents are very concerned about speeding, side shows, traffic rules that are not followed leading to accidents and deaths, often of innocent individuals. Enforcement, Education and Fines need to be required to address this growing crisis.

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?

I supported the Oakland Minimum Wage and Measure C- Oakland's Hotel Tax; I supported Measure Z to set living wage and workload standards for hospitality workers, to help them earn fair wages for a fair day's work, and take care of their families. Measure Z protects all Oakland workers by creating a Department of Workplace and Employment Standards to enhance enforcement measures that ensure that all low-wage workers in Oakland get paid at least the minimum wage and have fair workplaces.

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

Expedite and lower or waive permitting for business creation or expansion. Advocate for quality financing by both private and public lenders. Prioritize creation and implementation of strong technical assistance programs to provide customized support especially to businesses owned by women, persons of color and those businesses operating in West and East Oakland.