

Ben Gould - Green Party Endorsement Questionnaire

1. Motivation: Why did you choose to run for this office?

As a Berkeley native and Cal graduate student in Public Policy and Environmental Engineering, I don't think the current City Council has done enough to address housing affordability, reinvest in our parks and infrastructure, or expand Berkeley's leadership in environmental sustainability. With the other major candidates for Mayor having already been on Council for the past 8 or 12 years, I don't see what they'll do differently to address these issues if elected. I decided to run to bring new ideas and new leadership in City Hall so we could really tackle these challenges.

2. Priorities: What do you believe are the major issues facing your district? The City? What are some specific tasks (e.g. specific legislation, policies, et.) you intend to accomplish while in office?

Three issues:

- Housing affordability: There simply isn't enough housing in Berkeley for everyone who wants to live here, and so what little housing is available goes to the highest bidder. We need to build more housing at all income levels – both market-rate housing to ensure newcomers don't drive displacement and older housing is available for middle-income people, and subsidized low-income housing to keep our low-income families in Berkeley. I intend to make it easier to build housing – both market-rate and affordable housing – while in office, through simplifying the approval process and expanding the range of permissible construction.
- Parks & Infrastructure: Berkeley has \$500 million in deferred maintenance and capital improvements, due to a structural deficit created by Prop 13. We need to raise the revenue needed to close this deficit and pay down this debt, as well as find cost-saving strategies to ensure we can maintain high-quality parks and infrastructure for future generations. I plan to advocate strongly for higher taxes and find effective opportunities for savings in the City budget.
- Environmental sustainability: More than 35% of Berkeley's CO2 emissions come from burning natural gas. We have an aggressive climate goal to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, but our Climate Action Plan fails to address these emissions from natural gas. I plan to require new construction to not install natural gas, and develop a plan to retrofit existing buildings to use electricity instead, so we can really meet our target and keep the planet healthy for our children.

Qualifications: Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for being a City Council-member.

It's true I don't have the same depth of expertise in City issues as some of my opponents, but I do have leadership experience that they lack. Instead of serving

on City Council for the past several years, I have been actually leading organizations and teams working on concrete projects – everything from creating new governance structures for organizations to developing policy proposals to building physical engineering projects. In those leadership roles, my job has not been to be an expert on any one topic, but to bring together people with different areas of expertise and diverse viewpoints and develop solutions that met the needs of the project. It's exactly the role that the Mayor should be serving – I can certainly learn the issues quickly and develop proposals (my master's degree program in public policy focuses on training me in policy analysis), but what the City really needs is someone who can run meetings effectively and find areas of collaboration. That's exactly my area of expertise – and the City Councilmembers who have endorsed me recognize and value that. The fact that I am the only non-Councilmember who has received endorsements from sitting Councilmembers shows that I am uniquely qualified to serve as Mayor.

3. Land Use: What do you think are the most important land use issues facing the city today? The City and the University have different missions: what conflicts/challenges do you foresee on land use policy, and how would you address these? What should happen to People's Park?

I think the most important land use issues facing the City today center around housing. I believe we should use our land to build more housing, and lots of it. One of my opponents believes we should use our land to build more farms. I think this is the clearest distinction possible.

If we can create housing for the homeless residents of People's Park who seek it, I would support having the University build housing there. The City, the students, and the University all agree that the University needs to build more student housing; and the only issue appears to be where (and how much). In order to ensure that the students can travel to class without clogging up Berkeley's roads, the housing needs to be near campus; and the alternative to building on People's Park is tearing down many existing buildings, which would majorly impact both traffic and local businesses (and raise the cost for the University, which then passes it on to students).

4. Automobiles - What policies should the city take to reduce automobile use and make the city friendlier to pedestrians and other non-automobile transportation? Should the city promote electric car use, and what policy and infrastructure changes would you support, if any?

I am advocating for the City to drastically and aggressively expand its bike lane infrastructure, in conjunction with the arrival of bike sharing; as well as support new bus rapid transit lines and other transit modes coming to Berkeley. However, as a pragmatist, I realize that many people depend on automobiles; and as an environmentalist, my top priority is reducing greenhouse gas emissions – so if we can replace internal combustion engines with electric motors powered by a clean grid, that's a huge step. I believe the City should absolutely promote electric car

use, by making it as easily as possible to recharge electric vehicles (and gradually making it more difficult to refuel gasoline vehicles). However, I do not support subsidies for the wealthy, and am concerned about public support for people already sufficiently well-off to afford an electric vehicle. Hopefully, the price will come down in the near future to a more affordable range, so more aggressive support from the city can be justified.

5. Safety - What are the most important public safety issues facing the residents of Berkeley? What kinds of programs are useful for creating a safe environment for all people?

Sexual assault is an extremely important public safety issue, especially facing students. Property crime is another important issue, as is gun violence.

For addressing sexual assault, the City can work with the University to ensure students learn what assault is and that it is not acceptable. The City police have jurisdiction off University property, which is where many cases happen, and so they need to create a culture that is supportive and protective of victims to ensure that crimes are reported and can be persecuted.

Property crime can be addressed through regular police patrols – though as mentioned before, I would prefer to see nonviolent, de-escalated policing. I believe it is important to create a culture of protecting people of color – not profiling them.

Gun violence is always a tragic occurrence. Berkeley already does an excellent job restricting gun access; I'm afraid I'm not sure the City can do much more.

6. Affordable housing- What is your position on building market-rate housing versus affordable housing? Does building mostly market-rate help or hinder affordability in Berkeley? What affirmative steps would you take to increase the availability of new or refurbished affordable housing in Berkeley? Are there any particular demographics that you would target for this housing? Are there any particular neighborhoods that you would target for this housing?

I do not believe we should consider the two to be in opposition – more market-rate housing means more subsidized, affordable housing; and the sites available for affordable housing are distinctly different from the ones available for market-rate, so there does not need to be competition between the two. Building mostly market-rate helps affordability in the Bay Area, but I recognize that the Bay Area is so underbuilt overall that it may not do enough to help affordability in Berkeley specifically – which is why I fully support building more subsidized, affordable housing. I would make it easier to subdivide existing homes, add backyard units, and replace dilapidated or abandoned properties with new housing – regardless of affordability level. I would also make it easier for the University to build new

student housing, in order to soak up the demand for student living and push the market-rate developers to build more housing for families and seniors. I would advocate for new housing along all existing transit corridors, near existing transit stops (including North and Ashby BART stations), and along major thoroughfares with the opportunity to upgrade to new major transit corridors (e.g. Solano and north Shattuck).

- 7. Rent Control- How important is it to keep Berkeley's form of strong rent control and eviction protections? How important is keeping an elected rent board? What is your position on the effects of Costa-Hawkins (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costa-Hawkins_Rental_Housing_Act) on the affordability of Berkeley units? Is it an overall good or an overall bad law, looking back over the 20 years since it was passed? What can or should be done to roll back the massive rent increases new tenants face because of vacancy decontrol?**

It is important to keep Berkeley's form of strong rent control and eviction protections. As long as property owners benefit from Prop 13 protections, I believe renters should have similar benefits. I support having an elected Rent Board to protect tenants from unfair rent increases and prevent evictions. I recognize that Costa-Hawkins' vacancy decontrol has led to rents increasing more than they would otherwise in Berkeley, but I believe that without it, we would have more buildings allowed to decay further, and see very long wait lists to get into cheap housing (like we currently see with subsidized affordable units). Overall, I don't think it's particularly good or bad, but I do not think its restrictions on rent control should be weakened. I do not want to see a greater divide between renting households and owning households. I would much prefer to see the Bay Area build enough housing to create an oversupply and bring prices down that way.

- 8. Homelessness- Berkeley Greens agree with, but don't necessarily believe, the Democratic Party Platform where it states, "We will fight for robust funding to end homelessness in our cities and counties once and for all, through targeted investments to provide the necessary outreach, social services, and housing options for all populations experiencing homelessness." What do you think can and should be done about the "Homeless problem" here in Berkeley?**

I think Berkeley needs to take a leadership role in addressing homelessness through a supportive housing-first program, but we can't tackle the issue alone. We'll need to collaborate with the other counties in the region and the State to ensure we're collectively successful at ending involuntary chronic homelessness.

- 9. Food Policy- What policies would you support to re-localize our food system? Do you support labeling of GMO foods, similar to Vermont's law?**

I do not believe we need labeling of GMO foods, but I am not opposed to it. I do not think growing more of our food within City limits is important; but I do support sourcing food from nearby farms and protecting farmland from suburbanization.

10. Should the City Council take positions on national and international issues?

I believe it depends on the issue. In some cases – especially issues the City has a strong moral authority to speak from, or where the City is directly impacted – I believe it can be appropriate. However, I think the City Council should not, as a policy, seek to take positions on issues far outside its purview.

11. The trend in recent years has been for state and local law-enforcement agencies to procure military- grade weapons as well as high-tech surveillance equipment (drones, among others), and to adopt military- style tactics and training. This is generally but not exclusively under the aegis of Urban Shield. What do you think the Berkeley Police Department's and City's stance should be on this issue, as well as what you think the City's policy and practices should be? What would you do or not do as an elected official?

I do not support the escalation of police equipment. As an avid advocate for gun control, I personally feel less safe when I see police officers carrying firearms of any sort. I would prefer to see the City create new policies of drastic de-escalation – I think our City is safe enough that officers can leave the firearms in the car unless they have good reason to believe it may be needed. (I would support replacing their sidearms with less lethal, more defensive equipment, potentially including Tasers, as a compromise).

I also believe the City needs to do a careful evaluation of the services City residents call upon the police to provide, and determine if the police force as it currently exists is appropriately designed for responding to all of those types of issues, or if the creation of a new civil service might be more appropriate (and re-allocating some resources from police to support these new programs).

12. Do you support The Movement for Black Lives Platform?

Yes.

13. What specifically will do you think Berkeley needs to do locally to fight climate change? To make Berkeley a zero carbon city?

I think Berkeley needs to take a hard look at its dependency on natural gas. As I said before, more than 35% of Berkeley's CO2 emissions come from burning natural gas. We have an aggressive climate goal to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, but our Climate Action Plan fails to address these emissions from natural

gas. I plan to require new construction to not install natural gas, and develop a plan to retrofit existing buildings to use electricity instead, so we can really meet our target and keep the planet healthy for our children.

Deep decarbonization requires electrification of everything and clean, renewable power generation. The clean energy is coming online, through the State's Renewable Portfolio Standard and the County's Community Choice Aggregation. It's up to us to take advantage of the opportunity and replace our fossil fuel use with electricity.

- 14. What are your positions on the any or all of the eleven Berkeley Ballot Measures? Specifically, what is your position on the competing ballot measures on both the minimum wage and on increasing the business license tax on rental properties?**

I plan to support the Council-initiated version of the landlord tax, oppose both minimum wage measures in light of the consensus reached Friday, and support all other items.

- 15. Are there particular statewide initiatives you support? Proposition 59, if passed, would commit California officials to overturning the Citizens United case and getting money out of politics. Will you take the following pledge: "I support amending the U.S. Constitution to make clear that corporations and other artificial entities do not have Constitutional rights and that money is not speech and campaign spending should be limited through regulation."?**

Yes. I also support legalization of marijuana. I have not studied the other statewide initiatives in depth at this time.

- 16. Endorsements:**

a. Who are you endorsing, from President all the way down ballot to local races? I have endorsed Nancy Skinner for State Senate, Rebecca Saltzman for BART board, and Stephen Murphy for Berkeley City Council.

b. Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race, considering that we have instant run off voting? No.

c. Who has endorsed you? For a full list of endorsements, please visit my website: www.bengould.org/endorse

d. Who do you expect to endorse you? I expect a second-place endorsement from Berkeley City Councilmember Darryl Moore, but I am not otherwise expecting any more endorsements (though I am pursuing them).

- 17. Anything Else? Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?**