

Name:

Ben Gould

Address:

2110 Kittredge St. #212
Berkeley, CA 94704

Phone:

510-725-9176

Email:

ben@bengould.org

Website:

www.bengould.org

Current occupation:

Sustainability Analyst for the City & County of San Francisco

1. Motivation

Why did you choose to run for this office?

I'm running for City Council because I love this city and believe in the future of our diverse community. I was born at Alta Bates, attended Berkeley High, and ultimately earned my master's degrees from UC Berkeley, where I studied public policy and environmental engineering. I've spent the last four years serving our community, from campus to City Hall. As a UC Berkeley Graduate Assembly Delegate, I secured LGBT-inclusive healthcare for all students; as Chair of the Community Environmental Advisory Commission, I fought for our children against lead poisoning; and as a legislative aide in City Hall, I wrote policies to tackle the housing and homelessness crises. As your representative on City Council, I will continue to fight for our future and be a champion for families and young people. I will work with our first responders to improve public safety and address the increase in violent crime in our Downtown. I'll support the creation of green and affordable homes for all. I will use smart and effective policymaking to deploy collaborative regional approaches to ending homelessness. And I'll leverage my environmental expertise to lead the fight against climate change, expand transit and bicycle infrastructure, and create a truly welcoming and green Downtown.

2. Priorities

What do you believe are the major issues facing your district? The City?

Public safety, homelessness, and housing affordability.

What are some specific tasks (e.g. specific legislation, policies, et.) you intend to accomplish while in office?

1. Working with our first responders to achieve full staffing – we're currently budgeted for dozens more public safety officers than we've actually hired, largely due to recruitment challenges.
2. Working with our first responders to improve our dispatch center and improve training – right now, our 911 operators send the same firefighting / paramedic resources to every call, which ties up ambulances and responders and keeps them away from more critical emergencies. We also lack adequate training for both police and fire to deal with disasters or extreme events.

3. Building housing for the homeless with wrap-around services and an intake center to support it. Working regionally to replicate this model across Alameda County to ensure services aren't only available in Berkeley.
4. Creating more affordable housing and (aspirationally) meeting our RHNA goals for all housing levels.
5. Implementing Berkeley's bicycle master plan and seeing protected bike lanes and complete streets throughout our city.

3. Qualifications

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

I am a professional policymaker and analyst, and a longtime Berkeley resident. I was born at Alta Bates, attended Berkeley High, and graduated from UC Berkeley with master's degrees in public policy and environmental engineering. I've worked as a legislative aide in Berkeley City Hall, served as Chair of the city's Environmental Commission, and currently work as a Sustainability Analyst for the City & County of San Francisco. In addition, I've served on the Police Review Commission, Housing Advisory Commission, and Zoning Adjustments Board, and am currently a member of the Berkeley Democratic Club Board of Directors (on leave).

4. Land Use

What do you think are the most important land use issues facing the city today?

- How to create new housing, especially affordable housing, and address the skyrocketing rents and prices we see.
- How to protect, restore, and expand our parks and open spaces
- How to ensure our public right-of-way (roads, sidewalks, bike paths, trails) is a safe and welcoming place for all appropriate types of transportation

The City and the University have different missions: what conflicts/challenges do you foresee on land use policy, and how would you address these?

In recent years, the University has largely been respectful of the City's preferences for building heights and setbacks, but has not built enough housing for its students. I would work to maintain strong relationships with the University in order to continue their respect of the neighboring communities, while also pushing them to do more to create student housing close to campus.

What is your position on the building of housing on The People's Park?

I support the University's proposal to build housing for the homeless (with on-site wraparound services), housing for students, and providing a meaningful amount of usable open space.

5. Automobiles

What policies should the city take to reduce automobile use and make the city friendlier to pedestrians and other non-automobile transportation?

I support three major policies:

- 1) Fully implement the Bike Plan and make every major thoroughfare a complete street. Streets must be for all users, not just automobiles; we should have protected bike lanes and dedicated transit lanes throughout the city.
- 2) Implement dynamic pricing for street parking in our busiest areas (ie Downtown), as SF and other cities have done. A static price for parking does not reflect how difficult it is to find parking, and leaves drivers circling looking for parking for far too long.

- 3) Reduce or eliminate parking requirements (and/or implement unbundled parking pricing requirements) for new homes near transit, and support construction of those homes near transit. More people taking transit, biking, and walking makes it safer and better for all of those people.

Should the city promote electric car use, and what policy and infrastructure changes would you support, if any?

Yes. I support streamlined permitting for home & curbside EV charging infrastructure, as well as public infrastructure & the City moving to a 100% plug-in light-duty passenger vehicle fleet.

6. Safety and Infrastructure

What are the most important public safety issues facing the residents of Berkeley?

There are three major public safety issues: violent crime, fire & disaster preparedness, and automobile collisions.

What kinds of programs are useful for creating a safe environment for all people?

- Having well-trained and specialized first responders able to address a wide range of safety issues while protecting everyone involved (be it interpersonal – whether it's violent crime or a mental health crisis – or environmental, such as a natural disaster).
- Having a strong community network & program through the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

What infrastructure should be a high priority for city management?

The top priority for infrastructure should be any infrastructure that addresses health and safety – whether it's physical, like fixing our streets and sidewalks and lighting, or institutional, like staffing and providing equipment & training for both first responders and for basic functions like waste hauling. (Education would also make this list, except that is managed separately by Berkeley Unified School District).

7. Affordable housing

What is your position on building market-rate housing versus affordable housing?

I have yet to see a private builder propose to build affordable housing without also asking to build some market-rate housing. If we want to create affordable housing with directly expending tax dollars, therefore, it seems like we have to approve both rather than just one or the other.

Does building mostly market-rate help or hinder affordability in Berkeley?

The largest drivers of affordability in Berkeley is how much landlords are able to charge in rent and how much homeowners can sell their homes for. I don't think how much landlords and homeowners can charge is affected much by whether we build mostly market-rate or not.

What affirmative steps would you take to increase the availability of new or refurbished affordable housing in Berkeley?

I would support the construction of new affordable housing, and support the use of affordable housing funds (such as from U1) for the purchase and rehabilitation of existing units into affordable (subsidized, means-tested) ones.

Are there any particular demographics that you would target for this housing?

Berkeley residents at risk of displacement or being priced out.

Are there any particular neighborhoods that you would target for this housing?

I would prioritize building affordable housing throughout the City – otherwise, we will only reinforce the city's historical economic segregation.

Do you think Berkeley can/should tackle gentrification? If so, how?

Yes. I like to listen to experts when crafting policy, and the UC Berkeley Displacement Project is very clear: "both market-rate and subsidized housing reduce displacement pressures, but subsidized housing has over double the impact of market-rate units". Therefore, we should build both market-rate and subsidized housing, and City resources and policies should focus on incentivizing the creation of subsidized housing.

Do you support land value capture and should the City ask for a share in the increase in land value that results from upzoning?

Yes.

Do you support SB 827?

SB 827 is a dead bill that is no longer under consideration, and I only take positions on issues that affect the well-being of my constituents. Generally, I support allowing new housing near transit, and I believe that new housing near transit should be primarily multi-family buildings that align with the City's plan for the area.

8. Rent Control

How important is it to keep Berkeley's form of strong rent control and eviction protections?

Important.

How important is keeping an elected rent board?

Important.

Do you support any candidates for the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board? If so, which one(s) and why?

I have not formally endorsed any candidates for the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board because they have not asked for my endorsement.

What is your position on the effects of Costa-Hawkins on the affordability of Berkeley units?

I would defer to experts to analyze the effects of Costa-Hawkins on the affordability of Berkeley units – I believe this is something that can be measured and/or estimated based on data, and therefore does not require a position.

Do you support Proposition 10, the repeal of Costa-Hawkins?

I do not like ballot-box legislating and would have preferred to see the Legislature reform Costa-Hawkins, but I expect to be voting for it in November.

9. Homelessness

What do you think can and should be done about "Homelessness" here in Berkeley?

I believe we can and should build housing throughout all of Alameda County for people who were initially housed in Alameda County and are now unhoused and need assistance in securing homes and mental health and/or drug rehabilitation care.

What is your position on the Police raids on homeless encampments?

I do not believe homeless encampments are effective long-term solutions to homelessness. People who are living in unpermitted encampments which need to be disbanded for health and safety reasons should be given ample notice and assistance in relocating or receiving treatment and/or services.

What is your position on the evictions of houseless RV dwellers in the Berkeley marina?

I am under the impression that it is not legal to live in RVs at the Berkeley marina, and I am also under the impression that state law does not permit Berkeley to legalize RV dwelling at the Berkeley marina. I believe preserving any state funding or support we get for the marina is more important than legalizing RV dwelling at the marina.

Do you think the Pathways Project is a good use of city funds?

Not until we have subsidized permanent housing available for the homeless.

Have you made an effort to talk to the homeless and listen to their priorities?

Yes.

What essential services should be a high priority for the homeless?

Housing, mental health, and addiction rehabilitation services.

What long term city priorities can be made to meet their needs that are independent of regional, state or federal funding?

Affordable housing with wrap-around services.

10. Food Policy

What policies would you support to re-localize our food system?

I do not believe this is an important issue – I would defer to the data, but I am under the impression the vast majority of our food is already grown within a few hundred miles, because we're in California. I also believe it is more important that we have carbon-free transportation than that food be grown locally (especially because locally grown food can be very carbon-intensive), so I would prioritize decarbonization and electrification of transport policies first.

Do you support labeling of GMO foods, similar to Vermont's law?

No.

11. National Policy Statements

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

Only if those issues directly impact our constituents.

12. Police

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, UASI, and NCRIC.

Do you agree with the recent Berkeley City Council vote to allow Police to participate in Urban Shield for 2018?

I wrote an op-ed regarding my position on BPD's participation in the Urban Shield training program:
<http://www.berkeleyside.com/2018/07/19/opinion-what-i-saw-at-urban-shield-changed-my-mind>

Do you think participation in this training competition should be determined by the City Council, the City Manager, or the Berkeley Police Department?

I believe if the City Council does not trust its City Manager or its Chief of Police to be professionals, they should replace them. If the City Manager and Chief of Police have determined something is the best way for our City to implement policy directives from Council (e.g. practicing de-escalation techniques and preparing to respond to disasters or shootings), then Council should be extremely careful and thorough when reviewing all relevant information and what brought the City Manager and Chief to that conclusion before overruling it.

Do you think the Berkeley City Council should sign MOUs (memorandums of understanding) with NCRIC (Northern California Regional Intelligence Center), with ICE (Immigration and Customs) and with UASI (Urban Area Security Initiative)?

I think it depends on the nature and content of the MOU. I would certainly have no objection to seeing an MOU stating we will not work with ICE and to have them sign on in agreement, for instance.

How should Berkeley balance the right to privacy against police interest in surveillance equipment?
Carefully.

What is your position on the Police Review Commission (PRC) Charter Amendment (item 70 on the July 24 agenda) that the Council is considering for the 2018 ballot?
Council is no longer considering this item, so I have no position on it.

Do you favor creating a PRC that is independent of City Manager control?

I favor creating a police auditor's office that is independent of the Police Department and that works with the PRC to ensure effective oversight.

13. Race

Do you support The Movement for Black Lives Platform?

Yes

Is there anything that you have personally done to help your understanding of problems with racism and white supremacy in our society?

Yes, I've talked to other white people about it and worked to educate myself.

14. Climate Change

What specifically will do you think Berkeley needs to do locally to fight climate change?

To make Berkeley a zero carbon city?

In order to make Berkeley a zero carbon city, we need to eliminate all fossil fuels used in Berkeley.

15. Berkeley Ballot Measures

What are your positions on the Berkeley Ballot Measures?

\$135M Affordable Housing Bond?

Support

Police Commission Charter Amendment?

Not on the ballot

Amending the Rent Control Ordinance to Cover Newer Buildings?

Support

16. State Propositions

What are your positions on State Propositions?

I have not yet taken positions on most state propositions, as I am focusing first on the local issues that most affect my constituents.

17. Endorsements

a. Whom do you support for State Assembly District 15?

Buffy Wicks

b. Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race, considering that we have instant runoff voting? Who has endorsed you?

Greg Magofna and I have dual endorsed. We are asking voters to rank one of us #1, the other #2.

18. Campaign Financing

Will you obtain public financing for your campaign?

Yes

19. Health Care

Do you oppose Sutter Health's plans to close Alta Bates?

Yes

If so, do you have any ideas on how to motivate them to keep it open?

I believe we need to work with them to understand the cost of retrofitting the hospital and identify where that funding can come from, or if we should look at building a new hospital either in the same place or elsewhere nearby.

Do you support single-payer healthcare in California?

Yes

20. Anything Else?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

21. Have you signed either of the following pledges?

Yes, both.

A. For democracy: <https://movetoamend.org/candidate-questionnaire>

B. For peace: <http://www.peacelegislators.org/pledge-form/>