

Candidate Questionnaire

Name and email address

Moni Gangopadhyay, moni.district1@gmail.com

What Berkeley City Council District do you live in?

District 1

Do you have any background in Berkeley politics or community organizing? Please describe.

Yes, I started in my late teens with Youth Solidarity Summer. Later, in my first job out of college, I drafted several press releases for pro-labor candidates. More recently, I joined my fellow teachers on the picket lines and marches each day of an OUSD week-long strike. In Berkeley, I have stood next to my fellow anti-Flock, Save Berkeley Shops, and Build a Better Berkeley activists at City Council and Commission meetings to protect our residents from monied interests and promote the agency of people and affordability over profit.

What local issues are most important to you?

Affordability, local government and police accountability, prioritizing city services like street and sidewalk repair in equitable ways, and protecting, creating, and greening community spaces, especially in West Berkeley.

Will you opt into public financing of your campaign?

☒ Yes

☐ No

What policies would you put forth/endorse regarding housing and rent control?

I will advance policies that maximize affordability and improve the agency of renters over large and corporate landlords. I would explore avenues to increasing revenues for expanding affordable housing. These avenues include raising local transfer taxes, introducing a commercial vacancy tax and advocating at the State level for a wealth tax. We are fortunate to live in a city that values affordability through city measures like Measure P, Measure O, Measure W, and Measure U1. I would advocate to extend Berkeley's Rent Board protections to Golden Duplexes. Working with local renter and housing experts, I would reintroduce either a Community Opportunity to Purchase Act or a Tenants Opportunity to Purchase Act. If they can do it in San Francisco, we can do it here in Berkeley.

What are your views on upzoning and support of local businesses?

Our local business are a mark of Berkeley's values that prioritize people over corporations. Our businesses have suffered tremendously during COVID and from competition from online shopping. I doubt I am the only one to say that I value, rely on and support our beloved local businesses - in D1 from Acme Bakery, Fenton McLaren, the halal grocers, Casa Latina and Cafe Leila and those that have recently closed (e.g. Albatross - the country's oldest pub!). We need our City Council to prioritize our local businesses, so often run by women and immigrants, over large corporate interests. Upzoning increases land values and pushes local people and businesses out. As a state-level policymaker, I have seen too many times how broad brushstrokes in policy result in perverse incentives and bad actors. The same is true of upzoning large swaths of our vibrant commercial corridors. I now work as an investigator protecting Californians from the fraud that our well-intentioned, but overly broad programs created. We need skillful crafting of our housing policies to create maximum affordability and community-centered development.

How do you plan to make yourself available to and interact with constituents, particularly those that disagree with you?

I plan to hold office hours for our residents, plan town halls, and bring people on different sides of controversial issues together in targeted and facilitated meetings. We in Berkeley have much more in common than we do differences, though we may have different views on how we get to our common goals. We also have a tremendously talented and knowledgeable constituency. I would leverage this knowledge to advance better policies. One way to do this is to introduce a minimum of a 10-minute Q&A at City Council and Commission meetings so that City staff can be better informed and to improve engagement between our community and decisionmakers.

What are your views on police accountability? Please discuss both surveillance and crowd control measures (Flock cameras, tear gas) as well as fiscal accountability.

Berkeley needs a strong policy accountability board. We have seen time and again the value of their input on various issues concerning BPD. I am against surveillance, Flock cameras, and tear gas. We have sufficient data and experience demonstrating the harms and misuses of such tools in Berkeley and beyond. It is not fiscally nor ethically responsible to bring in tools that undermine our constitutional rights (e.g., warrantless searches) and to potentially expose our community to ICE through intentional or unintentional sharing of surveillance data. The same is true of removing our city's ban on the use of tear gas. The City has already paid over \$100,000 in lawsuits over the misuse of tear gas on peace protesters by the BPD. We need to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them.

How do you view the role of the City Council in Berkeley's long history of standing up for international human rights? How will you deal with outside foreign lobby groups, such as the JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council), when evaluating such concerns?

Berkeley has a history of standing on the right side of international issues. We took a stand in the Vietnam War. We were the first city to take action against apartheid in South Africa. The City Council is beholden to its people and not outside constituent groups. While my focus is on serving the people of Berkeley, I stand with the side of humanity, compassion, and ethics on international issues.

How do you plan to campaign? What are your strengths as a campaigner?

I campaign with my team, knocking on every door, learning and allowing Berkeley residents to inform our campaign. This is my strength - my ability and excitement to engage with our community. It is through this effort that I have learned of the extent of the diversity, vibrancy (many established and new neighbors!) and experiences in our beautiful community in District 1.

Do you have any community, labor, etc. groups that you anticipate will endorse your candidacy?

I am in the endorsement process and currently have Berkeley Tenant Unions endorsement.

How can we help you with your campaign?

We need volunteers and donations to support our hardworking team and get our message out to our community.

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