



## 2021 Municipal General Elections Candidate Questionnaire

Please answer each of the following questions in 150 words or less. Orange County Affordable Housing Coalition (OCAHC) is a non-partisan association of organizations and individuals interested in affordable housing, and does not endorse candidates. Instead, OCAHC members will share the completed questionnaires from all candidates throughout our networks, including with local media and organizations that make endorsements. (If you do not return a completed questionnaire, we will note that when sending the questionnaires to our networks.) Our goal is to help voters make informed decisions to elect leaders who will prioritize the policies and resources needed to address our community's housing crisis.

Thank you in advance for completing this questionnaire. Should you have questions, please contact OCAHC Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs George Barrett ([george@jacksoncenter.info](mailto:george@jacksoncenter.info)) or Jackie Jenks ([jjenks@ifcmailbox.org](mailto:jjenks@ifcmailbox.org)).

**Please submit your completed questionnaire via email to [ochousingcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:ochousingcoalition@gmail.com) by Saturday, September 25th at 12:00 pm.**

1. Describe the current housing situation in our community. What are the main drivers of affordability challenges (property taxes, development types, lack of land, etc.)?

We are witnessing a classic case of high demand and low supply. The Triangle Area is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States, with a well run International Airport, close proximity to a number of top tier universities and medical institutions, amenable climate, a business friendly regulatory environment, and relatively cheap and plentiful land, attracting high tech industry and telecommuters from all over the world. The new arrivals are coming from more expensive markets with lucrative cash offers for sellers that are impossible for long time residents and first time homebuyers to compete with. The problem, as we have seen from looking at the struggles of progressive communities on the West Coast, is not an easy one to solve, even with the best of intentions. We need to increase the housing stock at all price points. I believe we should do that first, by redeveloping already developed land and rezoning commercial properties to mixed use property before we look to develop wooded areas. Protecting our environment and keeping urban heat in check are priorities that must be

balanced with the growth of our towns and cities. We need to make sure that we have a healthy supply of apartments and condos as well as single family homes.

2. What is the most important role of an elected official/local government in ensuring all community members can afford housing?

I think there are many tools available to governments that can help make housing affordable. We can choose development projects that include a variety of options at different price points. We can support and court industries that will support the training and education of local workers and pay competitive wages, so people can afford housing in the local market. For lower income residents and retirees on fixed incomes, we can provide tax relief and assistance with utility costs. We can also incentivize homeowners to build and rent out apartments and accessory dwellings on their property. It is crucial, not just to focus on having adequate housing stock that people can buy, but also encouraging property owners to rent out their homes when they move instead of selling. Government housing is an important part of the affordability equation. HUD housing and apartment complexes should be part of the community, not concentrated in poorer areas. We need to work closely with non governmental organizations that are focused on providing safe, well maintained housing for very low income individuals and families. The goal, however, should always be to help those who are able to get the skills and training they need to be self-supporting. For people struggling with psychological issues, addiction, and other disabilities that make it difficult for them to provide for themselves, we as a society, need to provide both treatment and shelter while also protecting the community from violence and harassment. Chapel Hill and Durham are not doing a great job in this area. I personally have been followed and harassed by a man suffering with schizophrenia on Franklin St and by grifters on Main St in Durham. This is not acceptable, but is a predictable consequence of inadequate investment in mental health services and affordable housing. This problem has not yet come to Hillsborough, but we should expect it to, and invest now before we have a problem.

3. What is your prior experience in creating and promoting affordable housing?

As a military family, we moved every one to three years. With the exception of Palo Alto, CA, and overseas postings, where we could not afford to buy, we purchased the home we lived in, and rented it out once we left. We are very conscious of the important role affordable rental properties play in the affordable housing market. Currently, one of our previous homes houses 4 generations: a great-grandmother with dementia, a grandmother, a young mother with a drug addiction, and two young children. They are struggling with personal issues, but are model tenants who have been living in our previous home for 7 years. They maintain the home

perfectly, and the children are able to go to one of the best schools in the county because of the location of the home, in walking distance of downtown Clemson.

I am also a member of the Executive Committee of the Hillsborough Arts Council. We are a certified Living Wage Employer, committed to supporting artists and arts professionals by paying them what they are worth. We are on track to pay 55+ artists more than 60K in commissions this year. We pay our performers fairly, and never ask them to work for free (A problem with which anyone working in the Arts is quite familiar). One of the African American Spoken Word Poets working Last Fridays Art Walk, told me this week that he is now able to make a living from his writing because of the leadership opportunity and platform he was given at Last Fridays Art Walk .

4. In order of priority, what are three specific policy or funding initiatives related to affordable housing that you will support if (re-)elected?
  - a. Mixed use zoning and tax incentives for redevelopment of commercial areas
  - b. Tax relief and utility assistance for fixed income, long time residents
  - c. Partnership with non-profits like Habitat for Humanity and Durham Land Trustees in helping those struggling with housing affordability and gentrification
5. How would you create affordable housing for individuals 30% AMI and below?
  - a. Affordability is not just an issue of providing shelter to people. Most people do not want to live in government housing. They want to own their own home. We need to make sure that we are giving our residents the skills and opportunities they need to live independent, dignified lives. I will work hard to foster an economic environment in Hillsborough that offers living wages and dignity to people. We must learn from the terrible consequences of an over concentrated tech industry in California and welcome a variety of industries and employers to our area. We also need to support entrepreneurs and train, and honor those working in the skilled trades by making it easier to start and run a business in Hillsborough, and by incentivizing businesses to take on apprentices.
6. Our community has seen growing polarization on arguments for increased housing density weighed against environmental impacts. What is your position on this discussion?
  - a. We can start by breaking the wasteful and inefficient land use development patterns and habits we inherited from the past several decades that have depleted our natural areas and left us with acres of massive, ugly parking lots and strip malls. These areas need to be redeveloped with high density housing, mixed use retail and apartments. We cannot use the housing crisis as an excuse for wanton destruction of our natural environment. It would be cheaper and more expedient, but would be harmful to everyone in the long run.

7. How would you implement systemic solutions to inequitable property taxes in our community?
  - a. We need to put limits on how much a household's property taxes can increase in one year. We should make it easy for long time, low income residents to apply for property tax relief.
8. How do you view affordable housing as a racial equity issue?
  - a. I view affordable housing less in terms of race than as a socio-economic issue. Black neighborhoods are being gentrified and a lot of poor white folks living in trailer parks are losing their homes to make way for luxury condos.

**Please answer the following questions with Yes or No**

9. Will you support a new bond for affordable housing within the next two years?  
Yes, in principle, but I would have to see the proposed bond in order to decide whether I think it will help solve the problem.
10. Are you willing to dedicate at least 15% of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds toward affordable housing?  
Yes, in principle. I would have to see the exact proposal before committing.
11. Do you support building affordable housing for people 30% AMI or below on the Greene Tract? (Town of Chapel Hill and Carrboro candidates only).  
 Yes or No
12. Do you support building affordable housing for people 30% AMI or below on the former American Legion Property? (Town of Chapel Hill candidates only).  
 Yes or No