



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) or Jackie Jenks (jjenks@ifcmailbox.org).

Please submit your completed questionnaire via email to 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.)?**

The Triangle is in a housing crisis characterized by a few main drivers, including lack of supply to meet high and growing demand, lack of variety in types of housing, and a suburban-oriented form of development that exacerbates the lack of supply and promotes a monoculture of single-family homes that are largely accessible only by single-occupancy vehicles. This is a recipe for unaffordability.

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

Important roles for local governments include identifying gaps in our housing and homelessness systems, identifying goals and developing strategic plans to achieve those goals, and collaborating with other jurisdictions and housing partners to fund and complete projects.

An important role for elected officials is to develop relationships with local advocates who are rooted in the community to foster a political culture in which are holding each other accountable to our values and goals.

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

I was a strong supporter of the Town of Carrboro's recently completed initiative to dedicate a 1.5-cent property tax rate increase entirely to our Affordable Housing Special Revenue Fund, which has enabled us to fund the creation of new affordable units, maintain existing affordable units, and provide emergency rental assistance. Already, we have made a big impact. Through the largest individual grant the town has ever provided—in partnership with the Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County—affordable housing provider CASA was able to purchase land on Merritt Mill Road for the Perry Place project, ensuring that this centrally located property will provide permanently affordable, walkable, transit-accessible housing to residents of Carrboro and Chapel Hill. We also made a large grant to support the Habitat for Humanity project on Cobb Street.

The town has also prioritized grants from the affordable housing fund to support critical home repairs, utility payment assistance, and other efforts that enable residents on low and fixed incomes to stay in their homes. In addition, a recent staff report indicates we are on the way to our goal of creating 85 affordable-ownership homes and 470 affordable-rental homes by 2024. Nevertheless, the challenge remains and is growing.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have strongly supported the Town Council's decisions to allocate \$1.3 million in local and state/federal funds to the countywide emergency housing assistance program.

I have also been a supporter of the town's partnership with Chapel Hill and Orange County to plan for affordable housing on the Greene tract and to transfer town-owned land on Hill Street for a PeeWee Homes project.

I also supported the Lloyd-Broad zoning overlay district, which was intended to guide new development in this historically African American neighborhood to be consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood, in response to gentrification pressures. This effort was led by neighborhood residents with facilitation from the Jackson Center.

4. In order of priority, what are three specific policy or funding initiatives related to affordable housing that you will support if (re-)elected?

(1) Allocate funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to further bolster the town's Affordable Housing Special Revenue Fund; and continue to use of the affordable housing fund strategically to support new affordable housing projects, such as Perry Place on Merritt Mill Road and the Habitat project on Cobb Street.

(2) Continue the partnership with Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill to plan for affordable housing on the Greene tract; and identify other publicly owned land and evaluate its suitability for affordable housing development, such as the property on Hill Street for a PeeWee Homes project.

(3) Adopt and implement the Carrboro Connects comprehensive plan, including the use of zoning strategies that make it easier for property owners and developers to build more and different kinds of housing.

5. How would you create affordable housing for individuals 30% AMI and below?

Because of Carrboro's small size, using our affordable housing funds to support housing for individuals and families earning less than 30% AMI will require leveraging our special revenue fund in partnership with other local governments and nonprofit housing providers. For a challenge as difficult as meeting the housing needs of people living below the 30% AMI threshold, 3 important strategies are subsidy, collaboration, and use of publicly owned land. Developing affordable housing at this level requires significant public subsidy through grants (such as through Carrboro's affordable housing fund), tax credits, and other programs. The amount of subsidy required to make a big impact requires collaboration and coordination between the towns, the county, and nonprofit partners, similar to what we achieved with the Perry Place project on Merritt Mill Road. One important way for local governments to contribute is through the use of publicly owned land. Consistent with the community-led Mapping Our Community's Future initiative and the ongoing partnership between the towns and the county, I support the Rogers Road zoning initiative and other strategies to encourage compatible development (including affordable housing) in the Rogers Road neighborhood, including on a portion of the Greene tract. Meanwhile, the Town Council has also directed town staff to investigate the potential use of other town-owned land for affordable housing.

I have also been a strong supporter of devoting nearly all of the town's CARES Act funds to the countywide emergency housing assistance program during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we begin allocating funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, housing security for people in the greatest need should be a top budget priority.

6. Our community has seen growing polarization on arguments for increased housing density weighed against environmental impacts. What is your position on this discussion?

I do not believe increased housing density conflicts with environmental protection. On the contrary, greater housing density in the form of compact, walkable, transit-oriented development within the urban core is the best approach to promoting affordability, livability, and environmental sustainability.

7. How would you implement systemic solutions to inequitable property taxes in our community?

Options for local governments to create a more progressive taxation structure are limited under state law. The county's revaluation process needs a comprehensive review, and I was a strong supporter of the Town of Carrboro's letter amplifying calls to review inequities in the most recent revaluation in Northside, Pine Knolls, and Tin Top. I drafted the letter sent by the Town Council to Orange County on this issue, and I support the formation of a county-level property tax relief fund to support property owners affected by systemic inequities in the property revaluation process.

8. How do you view affordable housing as a racial equity issue?

As in most social domains—including health care, employment, education, and criminal justice—people of color are disproportionately represented in the communities most affected by housing unaffordability, gentrification, and displacement. Increasing the availability of affordable housing helps lower-income individuals and families gain access to social, civic, and employment opportunities and, therefore, is a key tool for achieving our goals to address racial disparities in wealth, health, and other indicators of well-being.

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 or No

(Assuming you mean a town bond, I would not. We recently completed a 3-part increase in the property tax rate dedicated entirely to our Affordable Housing Special Revenue Fund. I do believe Orange County's recent affordable housing bond should have been for a higher amount.)

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 or No

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