



## 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.)?**

Because our supply has not kept up with demand, pressure on housing prices is intense. Additionally, in the late '80s, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County created a rural buffer. This established a circle around the edge of town beyond which we agreed not to develop. The intent was to preserve the rural nature of Orange County while also preventing urban sprawl. The tradeoff inherent in the creation of the rural buffer, one which is now becoming more apparent as developable land becomes truly scarce, is that we need to use the land we have strategically. Chapel Hill continues to grow, with a demand for approximately 400 new dwelling units per year to accommodate this growth. Our housing supply has not grown sufficiently, and this inadequate supply leads to housing scarcity and increases housing prices.

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

Expanding access to housing for residents of all income levels is a key role of an elected official, through advocacy, collaboration, funding, and policies that creating a supportive environment. In my role on the Council, I advocated for the affordable housing bond and to use Town-owned land and resources for new affordable housing development, such as 2200 Homestead Road, Weaver's Grove, Peach Apartments, and Perry Place. I also voted to preserve the Tar Heel manufactured housing community and have been working to identify strategies to preserve others in town. I will continue to make housing for 30% AMI a priority in my second term, supporting for example, financing additional affordable units on Town-owned parcels and the Trinity Court RAD conversion, and advocating for an expansion of our master leasing program. The Council also has a key role in negotiating with developers to provide affordable units and we have been successful in getting more on-site units than ever before.

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

I grew up in Chapel Hill as a college town, and only got to know another version of Chapel Hill once I began working with the residents in our public housing communities for the OC Family Resource Centers. It was then that I began to understand the multi-generational impact on low wealth, largely BIPOC community members of poverty, exclusion, and lack of access to all Chapel Hill offers. The struggles these neighborhoods face are largely invisible and often overlooked. In my current term, I have worked to address issues of equity, inclusion, and opportunity, of which access to affordable housing is critical. Over the last four years, we have approved a \$10 million affordable housing bond; approved the use of 3 parcels of Town-owned land for affordable housing development; and approved and/or funded many new affordable developments and the upgrade of aging public housing.

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

- Continue to leverage Town-owned land to reduce the cost for new affordable housing construction
- Create a "jump the line" policy for development applications to expedite the Town's approval process for those developers who offer 30% or more of their units as affordable housing.
- Implement a manufactured housing community preservation strategy

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

There are currently 460 housing units serving 30% AMI with another 75 in the pipeline. This is a very positive step but not nearly sufficient. The market won't produce housing for 30% AMI – the cost of land and construction are simply too high to make it feasible. Therefore, the local government must prioritize housing serving this population or it won't happen. I will continue to make housing for 30% AMI a priority in my second term by prioritizing creation of additional

affordable housing on Town-owned parcels; financing the Trinity Court RAD conversion; and advocating for an expansion of our master leasing program. We also need to find a way to ban source-of-income discrimination so that housing choice vouchers will be more widely accepted. I have already asked the Town Attorney to research our options to address this discriminatory behavior. Continued advocacy with the state government for removal of statutory prohibition of rent control.

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

Because of the rural buffer, as discussed above, we need to use the land inside the buffer strategically. If we try to prevent new housing (re-)development in town to preserve trees, we are undermining the premise of the rural buffer that denser development in town will prevent sprawl and preserve nature within the buffer. We focus on preserving trees while forgetting that on any given night there are no fewer than 40 unsheltered people living among those trees. Those 40 represent only 20% of our county's homeless, the rest have temporary housing only due to our incredible local shelter and housing providers. It's also important to note that since the start of the pandemic, homelessness in the county has increased by 35%. We have allowed ourselves to fall into the trap of a false dichotomy. It should not be trees vs. people. It should be trees and people. With thoughtful planning and open conversations with our community, we can preserve most of our trees, create new and appealing green spaces, and create the housing we need for all who wish to live here while not pricing out marginalized and lower-income households.

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

In May, Council Member Parker and I brought forward a petition calling on the Town to commit to contributing to the OC fund established to subsidize the county property tax payments for low-income property owners whose valuation had risen to unsustainable levels in the 2021 revaluation due to systemic racial inequities in the valuation process. The high value of investor-owned and -developed housing skewed results due to the way in which the county applied the state's appraisal methodology and created artificially high and unsustainable tax values for long-time homeowners. I am hopeful this will be a short-term solution while we engage in and support community-led advocacy efforts to revise the county's revaluation approach to take into consideration age, condition, deed restrictions and other considerations that impact home values.

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

The history of housing in this country is one of racial discrimination and segregation. Whether overtly, as was the case until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or covertly since then, via redlining, racially restrictive property deeds and covenants, and zoning laws, housing policy in American has served to restrict Black American access to homeownership and the multi-generational wealth-building that accompanies it. Some of these practices continue in other ways and it's challenging to root them out. The legacy of these practices can still be felt in the predominant single-family zoning that continues to limit housing production, preserves wealth for existing homeowners, increases property values and unaffordability and excludes people of color. I am looking forward to the LUMO re-write which will provide the opportunity to address the current exclusionary zoning that dominates our current residential zoning.

**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
  
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