



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 main drivers of affordability challenges are: cost of land because Chapel Hill is almost built out, the length of development review that increases the cost of development, and high property taxes due to a largely unbalanced tax base. All of these drivers affect housing affordability for both homeowners and renters, and must be addressed in order to maintain and grow affordable living for all of our residents.

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

The most important role of an elected official and of local government is to assess housing needs and existing inventory at all income levels for both homeowners and renters, and then efficiently pass development projects that build affordable housing to meet those needs.

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

I serve on the Board of EmPOWERment Inc where I help guide our organization's strategic vision to manage and develop rental units that house our community's most vulnerable population and essential workers. Additionally, I serve on the board of the Marian Cheek Jackson Center where we are committed to Community-First Planning and support a group of neighbors from all across Northside develop neighborhood strategy, guide our community landbank, and lead efforts to preserve the future of Northside. As the Secretary of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP, I helped organize the House Us Now March where we advocated for housing at 30% AMI. I work at the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service where I advocate for and train advocates in how to promote affordable housing before elected bodies.

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. **Leverage Town-owned land such as the Greene Tract, Jay Street, and the American Legion property to build affordable housing**
2. **Advocate for expedited review of affordable housing developments to keep the cost of the development process low, and foster affordability**
3. **Leverage the Town's Affordable Housing Bond to fund projects that build for residents at 30% AMI**

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

I would advocate for: leveraging of our Town's Affordable Housing Bond to support housing efforts building for 30% AMI and expedite our development review to incentivize developers to build at 30% AMI.

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

Housing density and environmental justice are not mutually exclusive. We need to ensure that our residents of all income levels, renters, and homeowners are housing secure in transit-connected developments while preserving greenspace and decreasing car dependency. I'm a climate activist, not just a preservationist. I believe climate activism encompasses comprehensive planning for housing density connected by transit that incorporates green spaces while keeping negative externalities limited.

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

I live in the Northside community that was directly impacted by inequitable property tax increases. On Council, I would work with the County to ensure that residents get notified of their tax increases year-year every year so that they're aware of what's going on with their properties. I would also encourage collaboration with the Commissioners to explore alternative property tax value analyses--we should not be using bigger student rentals as comps to determine our property tax valuations. We can also work with County Tax Assessors to conduct more frequent on-site inspections of properties to ensure that the County has the latest property details in the database.

I serve on the Board of the Marian Cheek Jackson Center--I would continue to highlight and support their landbank efforts to advocate for residents impacted by the issue.

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

Affordable Housing is entirely a race equity issue. Decades of redlining, denied access of African Americans to home loans, and the rapid gentrification of our community's African American neighborhoods has led to inequitable housing access in our community. We must apply a racial equity lens when addressing housing affordability. We must ensure that we're supporting affordable housing development in our most marginalized neighborhoods, advocating for financial products (loans, financing) for our essential workers, and understand how to provide services to a group of people that has been excluded and marginalized for decades.

Please answer the following questions with Yes or No

8. Will you support a new bond for affordable housing within the next two years?
 Yes or No
9. 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
10. 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
11. 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