

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2022 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

**General Information**

Candidate Name: Samantha Mota

Email Address: [SamanthaMota@votesmforasm.com](mailto:SamanthaMota@votesmforasm.com)

Phone Number: (424) 228-0667

Candidate's Current Occupation: Barista

Candidate's Employer: Dogtown Coffee

Campaign Contact Person: N/A

What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I am an activist and advocate, for policies, such as AB 551, that would help combat climate change, food insecurity and generate revenue. Not only that, I am a longtime member and participant of the community who has beautified vacant parcels of land, as a silent means of protest, to demand community access to land and water. I am young, vibrant, energy that brings a different perception to the capabilities our City and community can become.

Why are you running?

When I was younger, I took a trip with *Climate Action SM* (CASM) to meet former City Manager, Rick Cole, to discuss our involvement with the program and politics. It was sitting in his office, I knew City Hall was where I was meant to be because I could make the greatest change and impact by resolving the issues that go on in our lives, family, and community. Since

then it has been my hearts desire to run for City Council and this year, I actually had the courage to just go for it.

What are the top issues of your campaign? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

**Advocate and reinforce new and existing climate policies** - Continue to pillar for AB 551 which creates pathways for a vibrant economy, increase our resiliency, and support Santa Monica's vision for a livable and sustainable city for generations to come. Additionally, it would strengthen existing policies, such as, the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan, the Sustainable City Plan, the Recycling Ordinance, and Vision Zero

**Address displacement & gentrification** - Santa Monica is largely built on racially-charged discriminatory practices that still live on through policy. For that reason, I will push for education and awareness so lines that were placed to divide us can be erased and our City united. Through apology and public policy, I will prioritize low-income, communities of color who are disproportionately affected by rising rents and home prices. Furthermore, I will advocate for Right to Return and Preference policies, the Equity Plan, and find other ways to ensure Santa Monica is accessible, diverse, equitable, and inclusive

**Promote affordable and sustainable development** - Our City would be able to expedite affordable housing and advance multi-modal transit by widening streets and expanding bike lanes. Not only that, we can adopt SB 9 & 10 to end single-family zoning and combat the housing crisis. In addition, I will advocate and organize the community to support the Zero

Emissions Building and EV Reach Code, which would further support climate policies and help meet Paris Agreement Standards to reduce greenhouse gas mitigation.

**Find viable solutions to the drug, homeless, and mental health crisis** - As many crises continue to permeate our community, I will continue to be a voice for more Overdose Prevention and Outreach Sites, Intervention Programs, Shelters/housing, Psychiatric beds and Public Restrooms to reduce public urination and defecation. Most importantly, I hope to build and collaborate with various departments and cities to find other solutions to fight the underlying problem instead of continuing to ignore it.

**Public Safety** - Ensuring our first responders are well-funded and invest more into Wellness Programs that allow individuals to get professional help for trauma, PTSD, etc. Equally important, I will support the Public Safety Reform & Oversight Commission by assisting with the OIR recommendations, in partnership with the police department and further community-building and trust. Collaboratively, we can bring new policies, practices, and reform to guarantee our police department is accountable, credible, and transparent.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements

**Criz Guiterrez** - Co-founder of Climate Action Santa Monica and Gardening Committee Chair

**Mica Williams** - Former Climate Action Alumni and Steering Committee member

**Laurene Von Klan** - Co-chair of Climate Action Steering Committee

**Teague Weybright** - Office of Sustainability & the Environment Community Gardens Program Coordinator

**Andrew Gomez** - Parks and Recs Commissioner

**Miranda Basseri** - Public Safety Reform & Oversight Commissioner

**Talia Tinari** - Founder of Santa Monica Roots

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived, and why did you live there?

I have lived in Santa Monica during my 23 years of life. I resided in Lennox, CA for a bit because my mom got married but I've always stayed in Santa Monica on weekends and vacations because all of my neighborhood friends lived here.

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term?

Absolutely.

### **Party/Activism**

How long have you been a registered Democrat? Have you ever registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline to State? If so, which party and why?

I have been registered as a Democrat for maybe a month or so. Prior to changing my political party, I was registered as Decline to State. I, Declined to State, because I don't identify with any political party. But, I know that third parties rarely get elected, so my only option was joining the two-party system: Democrat or Republican

What is your experience with political activism? Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved?

I am very experienced with political activism because I am a guerilla gardener. I went into the vacant lot I played in as a kid and beautified the space with various fruits and vegetables. It's a form of protest and direct action, to demand land rights and land reform. Because of this, I

learned about AB 551 from the community and we organized then advocated for the Parks & Recs Commission to recommend the policy to City Council to be adopted and implemented. Unfortunately, I have only worked on my own campaign.

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible.

N/A

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled?

N/A

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization.

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here:

<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on every word of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

## **Business and Economy**

- Expect all businesses to provide services fully accessible to all Californians
- Reward employers that choose to remain in California by giving the California Treasurer/Board of Equalization the mandate to negotiate competitive packages of discounted state-based fees and/or taxes to offset some of the employer's anticipated cost savings from moving the business out of California

Everything else was good.

## **Campaign Finance**

Please indicate Yes or No to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs. : YES
2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs. : YES
3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs : YES

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here:

N/A

## **City Governance**

What is your brief assessment of how City Council has functioned over the past two years? Do you believe we should keep the current system of seven at-large council seats? What other type of representation would you be interested in exploring?

Our current City Council has functioned very divided and disorderly. Yes, I do believe we

should keep the current system of at-large council seats because the judge already decided to overturn the trial court decision in *Pico Neighborhood Association & Maria Loya v. City of Santa Monica* and it's a waste of funds that could be better utilized elsewhere. Another type of representation I'm interested in exploring is town meetings. It allows all eligible voters a voice in local policy decisions.

Do you support the elimination of the City Manager position and/or the creation of an empowered, directly elected Mayor of Santa Monica?

I am neutral on this topic because it may become a lot to deal for an elected Mayor but I am open to the idea.

Do you favor any changes to our City Charter as a means to make the city government more democratic?

Besides Town Meetings, nothing else I can think of so far.

Are top city staffers' salaries too high, and is this a potential source for balancing the City budget?

Yes, because funds could be better utilized for development: housing, infrastructure, green/open space, etc.

Should each City Council member have their own paid staffer, and/or should Council be a full time job?

Yes, there is one staffer for seven members and each elected member should have its

own designated staffer. And, I do believe being apart of City Council should be a full-time job.

### **Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**

In what ways can the City of Santa Monica ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our community?

Santa Monica still practices racially-charged discriminatory practices via Zoning, but it can be changed by ending single-famile zoning, pushing for education and awareness, and prioriting low-income, communities of color through apology and public policy.

In what ways can the City of Santa Monica better protect its undocumented residents? How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Councilmembers or members of the public?

What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

Santa Monica can better protect its undocumented residents by removing any eligibility barriers, raising awareness through outreach and multilingual resources, as well as tailoring support to the specific needs of the community. If any councilmember or members of the public make possible acts of microaggressions, I will listen and finish with a calm, cool, and collected response.

What are the most significant environmental justice issues in Santa Monica, and how will you address them?

The most significant environmental justices issues in Santa Monica are all of them. From

water, to land, to building codes, we must make our city more sustainable so future generations have a livable and thrivable City. Thus, we will become a more self-reliant and self-determined community.

What specific initiatives to increase diversity and promote inclusion among City staff are you interested in pursuing, and how will you work with the City Manager to implement these policies?

One specific initiative to increase diversity and promote inclusion among City Staff is by hiring. Creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces starts with hiring from underrepresented groups. I will work with the City Manager to implement these policies by appropriating funds to hire more Staff where they are needed, as well as, promoting pay equity and assessing policies.

### **Housing / Development**

What steps would you propose to address the homelessness crisis in the City of Santa Monica?

The first step I would take to address this crisis is to address it for what it really is, a drug, homelessness, and mental health crisis. Then, I would combat these issues with a, “housing first,” approach where we can get our vulnerable into apartments, not shelters, and without requisitions. Then, I would advocate for more outreach and overdose prevention sites, intervention programs, and increasing psychiatric beds. The truth is, it takes a lot more than housing to eradicate these crises, it means addressing systemic racism, changing our mental health structure, increasing family support and substance abuse systems, raising wages, expanding the federal housing voucher program and building more subsidized homes.

What is your philosophy on the appropriate scope of development that should be approved in Santa Monica?

My philosophy for the appropriate scope of development is to build what is needed and some to lower market rates.

In what specific ways has Santa Monica failed to address the housing affordability crisis? What concrete steps would you take on Council to better address the crisis?

Santa Monica has failed to address the housing affordability crisis by not building fast enough and only developing in certain neighborhoods. One major concrete step I would take on Council to better address the crisis is ending single-familing zoning and changing zones and codes to open space up for sporadic development so certain neighborhoods aren't densified and gentrified.

How can the City of Santa Monica meet its next RHNA cycle goal of 6,153 new deed restricted affordable housing units for low and moderate income households and 2,721 new market rate housing units?

By moving forward to densify former single-family zones

What is your assessment of the 2022 Housing Element proposed by City Council? The Rent Board and its staff have committed to hosting a discussion about the city's rent control law with the community at large. The City has always complemented the Rent Charter's mission in the areas of the City's jurisdiction, including: Tenant Harassment, Code Enforcement, Land Use (AirBnb & corporate rentals laws) and Tenant Relocation Benefits. How would you enhance or

change these areas of tenant protections on City Council?

My assessment of the 2022 Housing Element is a good but it's all written words, we need to further increase the speed and availability to build. I would enhance tenant protections on City Council by championing for a local right to council ordinance and promoting for the expansion, preservation, and protection of rent-controlled units and tenants.

What do you see as the mission or purpose of Rent Control in a city where 70% of the population are renters?

The purpose of Rent Control in the City of Santa Monica is to maintain oversight over rent prices and control eviction. It is desperately needed when our neighbors, friends, and family are being pushed out.

## **Public Safety**

What is your assessment of the role of the Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission in Santa Monica?

My assessment of the role of the Public Safety & Reform Oversight Commission is to find bring the best practices in community-oriented policing for fair treatment, safety, and well-being. As well as, implement polices, practices, and reforms handling complaints regarding SMPD for the intake, review, and investigation of, and oversight of disciplinary decisions and policies.

What is your assessment of the OIR Report regarding the police response on May 31, 2020, and what changes to City and SMPD policy should be implemented in light of its findings?

My assessment of the OIR Report regarding the police response on May 31, 2020 was a lack and failure of accountability, credibility, and transparency. There are major changes the City and SMPD should implement, such as, more civilian oversight over the police, ensuring our armed first-responders are held to the highest standards, and our Police are disciplined accordingly.

What steps do you think need to be taken in the next two years to reduce crime in the City? If this requires additional funding, how should it be funded?

Some steps that need to be taken to reduce crime in the City is opening up our police to do their job. First we must get as many individuals off the streets and into housing, then combat the dependency and disability factors of our vulnerable. Finally, we must put more forces on the ground to try to prevent criminals from attempting a crime.

Is the Santa Monica Police Department presently well funded? Should more or less of the City budget be allocated to hiring SMPD officers?

I believe the Santa Monica Police Department is well funded and if more funds are to be allocated to our Police Department, we would first need to create a comprehensive set of goals and policies to generate more revenue without proposing cuts to other vital departments in the City.

Do you support efforts to promote investment of general fund monies previously allocated toward armed police response to instead go toward mental health services and other unarmed departments when appropriate?

Yes because our drug, homelessness, and mental health crisis is currently treated as a crime, instead of a disease.

Do you support or oppose efforts to recall District Attorney George Gascón? Do you support DA Gascón's special directives on restorative justice? If not, what approach should be taken?

I oppose efforts to recall District Attorney George Gascón because it is a waste of taxpayer money that could be put to better use elsewhere. I do support Gascón's on restorative justice that focuses on intervention and rehabilitation for individuals charged with misdemeanors and nonserious or nonviolent felonies who pose no risk to the community.

Was the City Council justified in choosing *not* to implement an indoor vaccine mandate during the omicron surge in January/February 2022? What was your position at the time?

The City Council was justified in *not* choosing to implement an indoor vaccine mandate during the omicron surge in January/February 2022 because it wouldn't get full support from the public or all Council members. My position has and will always be the right to bodily autonomy and integrity. I was unfairly stripped of opportunities as a consequence of refusing to get vaccinated and have witnessed our elected officials be contradictive, in the case of, *my body, my choice*.

## **Mobility**

Should Santa Monica encourage more pedestrian-only streets like the Third Street Promenade? If so, on which streets would you consider this?

Yes, and that is a great question I don't have the answer to.

Do you support additional Metro rail lines being built in Santa Monica, and if so, which potential projects do you support? Which regions of the City would you like to see serviced? Should shared mobility devices and apps (eg, scooters, e-bikes) be encouraged or discouraged in Santa Monica?

I do support additional Metro rails being built in Santa Monica, especially the Santa Monica Pink Line and putting rails into neighborhoods that would otherwise be zoned out.

Should the overall amount of street parking in Santa Monica be reduced in order to encourage a shift away from cars toward other modes of transportation?

In all honesty, I don't mind because cycling is my main form of transportation, however, I cannot speak for those who have cars and already endure finding no parking.

### **Ballot Measures**

Do you support California Proposition 1?

I do support CA Prop 1 and will be voting YES.

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD?

Why/why not?

I do support the citizens initiative ballot because it wouldn't only provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD, but because it would expedite the process with minimal independent oversight or resident input. At the same-time, we must be conscious

of sustainable codes & design and deed-restricted units when approving projects.

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%?

Absolutely, without rent control, many of my neighbors, families, and friends, including myself, would not be able to thrive in Santa Monica.

Do you support the SMC bond measure?

I do support the SMC bond measure because it would help fund needed updates to existing facilities, create housing for low-income students, and provide technology upgrade.

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure?

I do support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure because it would generate revenue to support City services at levels before the pandemic.

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure?

I do support the cannabis tax ballot measure because it generates more revenue that the City can use

### **Federal Legislation**

Do you support the **Inflation Reduction Act of 2022** which just passed Congress? It compromises on many of the important provisions included in the previous Build Back Better Act. Do you think it's good enough?

No, I don't support the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 because it was rushed and could've been a thorough and thoughtful bill.

What do you think of legislation proposed since Roe v Wade was struck down – designed to protect other previously assumed fundamental freedoms? Notably: the **Right to Contraception Act** (HR 8373) and the **Respect for Marriage Act** (HR 8404) which would codify into federal law the rights for access to contraception and same-sex and interracial marriage. Do you think we need the **Protecting Access to Medication Abortion Act** (S 4467)? It defends access to medication abortion in states where the right to an abortion is still protected. Do you support the **Medicare For All Act** (HR 1976)?

The proposed legislation from California since Roe v Wade was struck down has been to protect patients and providers and to strengthen access to reproductive health care. And, I do believe we need the the *Protecting Access to Medication Abortion Act (S 4467)* because it defends access to abortion medication. To add, I do support the *Medicare for All Act (HR 1976)* because it establishes a national health insurance program to provide protection against the cost of health care and health-related services.

Whether you support that bill or not, how can we ensure universal, single payer health care coverage for all Santa Monicans?

I support the bill that would provide a national health insurance program. But, other ways the City can ensure coverage for all Santa Monicans is by partnering with a clinic to create more accessible and affordable health services.

## **Additional Questions**

What steps must Santa Monica take to enact a Green New Deal in our own city, if any? Although marijuana is legal in California for recreational use, there are currently no dispensaries operating in Santa Monica. Why is this the case, and should that be changed? If dispensaries are allowed in Santa Monica, what processes would govern the business approval process to ensure equity?

Some steps we must take to enact a Green New Deal in Santa Monica is by ensuring our Council has an educated, organized, and supportive community to move forward with making Santa Monica livable for generations to come. Moreover, I believe there are currently no dispensaries operating in the City because raids of shops have forced everyone out. In addition, it should be changed to generate revenue for City services. Furthermore, a process that would govern the business approval process to ensure equity is to uplift small businesses, instead of ever growing corporate dispensaries, such as, MedMen.

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City? If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals?

I believe the SMDCs role in Santa Monica should be to advocate and generate awareness to bills that best represent our community. And, if elected I would attempt to interact more with the Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals by doing the research and organizing the community to be involved and participate.

