

# **Santa Monica Democratic Club**

## **2022 City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Monica Democratic Club endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of our Club must complete and return the following questionnaire. Note that only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration.

Please send the completed questionnaire to [smdemocrats@gmail.com](mailto:smdemocrats@gmail.com) by 11:59pm on August 26, 2022. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis as the questionnaires are returned.

Submitting this questionnaire constitutes acknowledgment that its contents are now part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by the Santa Monica Democratic Club.

### **General Information**

Candidate Name: Troy Harris

Email Address: [info@troyharris.com](mailto:info@troyharris.com)

Phone Number: 424.324.1411

Candidate's Current Occupation: International Account Manager

Candidate's Employer: UPS

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate):

What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I am a 9-year resident of Santa Monica and 38 years old. Beyond that I have a diverse background including 3 years working behind the scenes in entertainment and 12 years working in business-to-business sales in a corporate environment which makes me the perfect combination of creative and analytical. After finding that my passion is to serve justice on behalf of the human race, I plan to apply those skills as an elected official in Santa Monica City Council.

Why are you running?

I am running because I believe I am uniquely qualified to solve the city's biggest issues. I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood which as a Black person was difficult when faced with racism and I looked to Martin Luther King for inspiration, wanting to be like him to make it easier for people like me. These hard times led to me self-medicating which as an adult living in Santa Monica caught up to me one day when I collapsed from dehydration. SMFD saved me and I knew I wanted to give back, but I didn't know how, and I was in no shape to do so yet. Then the social unrest of May 31, 2020 happened, when looters took over the peaceful protests, and I saw the two communities I love rise to the forefront. I knew that on the surface it looked like the Black Community was responsible for causing damage in Santa Monica but I knew this wasn't the case. I turned to MLK for guidance and found that he said justice is the cure for crime and I applied this to myself as an individual and turned my life around and want to do the same for my community, both the Black community and Santa Monica. After quitting my vices in November 2021 and writing a book to help others, I am working to benefit my community in the most effective way possible, running for office in local government.

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

The top issues of my campaign are public safety and homelessness. I plan to address these by enacting a commercial vacancy tax to hold commercial building owners accountable to the community they serve by enabling businesses that serve the entire income level spectrum to exist in the storefronts that currently sit vacant. I want to put the vacancy tax revenue towards

supplementing businesses that move into these vacancies as well as small independent residential landlords. The commercial vacancy tax will create an existence of new business that will generate more sales tax revenue that will enable an increase in staffing in police and fire as well as fund services for rehabilitation for the city's unhoused community. We cannot serve more people than our own community so enforcing anti-vagrancy laws, compassionately and ethically, to people who newly appear in Santa Monica unhoused, is what I plan to do.

Beyond that, the other core issue of my campaign is housing, particularly in the effort to rectify the city's racist history of eminent domain and the Belmar neighborhood that affected Blacks and other people of color. Since we are in a diversity crisis and only 4% of the city is Black, I want to build more housing and enable pathways for decedents of these victims to come back to Santa Monica. I plan to address this by creating a freeway cap so housing can be built on top which would also ease the flow of traffic by creating more streets that cross the freeway. I want to create programs with funding and partner with other LA cities with high Black populations which would repair the reputation for Santa Monica and ultimately be a holistic approach to increasing public safety.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

My current endorsements include Anthony Coombs, Patricia Meisels, Jonathan Marinaro, Ben Harris, Ishmael Hall, Kenny Harris, Jay Todd, Roy Vongtama, Zach Connolly and Eric Schmidt.

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 for 9 years. I also lived in Phoenix, AZ for 21 years, Tucson, AZ for 2 years, Van Nuys for 3 years, and North Hollywood for 3 years.

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

Yes.

## **Party / Activism**

How long have you been a registered Democrat?

20 years (since I became eligible to register).

Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? If so, which party and why?

No.

What is your experience with political activism?

I started an informal neighborhood organization called NOW Santa Monica with my friends to encourage community connections. Part of the goal was to enable people to use their voice and speak out about issues concerning the neighborhood and to give back philanthropically.

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

I made some phone calls on Barack Obama's campaign when I was living in Van Nuys.

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

many as possible.

Barack Obama and President Biden.

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office?

No.

If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.

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

Wilmont Neighborhood 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.)

None.

## **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. No
3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs. No.

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

I don't anticipate receiving contributions from police or development unions lobbyists or PACs but I am not outright opposed to police or developers. If they appreciate my platform, I would consider using their contribution to benefit my campaign to the degree that it does not become a dominating force. I am in no way pro-developer but development is an essential aspect of housing which I am for. I am pro-police.

## **City Governance**

What is your brief assessment of how City Council has functioned over the past two years?

My assessment of how city council has functioned is that there are factions that are at odds with each other. There is a group that is progressive and there is a group that is conservative. The citizens' initiative by the mayor and the following countermeasure by a councilmember was the root of a big disagreement recently which made city council look immature. I plan to bring civility to the council and handle disagreements with tact.

Do you believe we should keep the current system of seven at-large council seats?

Yes.

What other type of representation would you be interested in exploring?

None.

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

No. The current system allows for the power to be spread out which preserves democracy.

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

Deregulate in the effort for more effective business practices and more home-share entrepreneurship. Many businesses complain that Santa Monica doesn't allow businesses to make changes to their business very easily. As a home-share entrepreneur, I see the value of Airbnb enabling me to save up and eventually own property—there are enough tourists for hotels and home-sharers to succeed—but not enough people who would share their home are given the

opportunity due to restrictions.

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

The previous police chief and highest earning police had salaries that were too high—and while we need competitive salaries to maintain an effective workforce, it cannot come at the detriment of the rest of the community by absorbing too much of the budget.

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

Potentially when the city is thriving again.

## **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?

Black Lives Matter is a great concept but I see it as an attention getting segue to what we really need which is civil rights. So there ought to be audits in rental community to ensure housing is fair. There ought to be programs that attract diverse landlords to account for homophily and ensure, though we'd like to avoid it, it doesn't only occur by one group. There should be programs that incentivize the usage of Black owned businesses such as payments to commercial landlords. There should be more housing. We should set an example that though Black empowerment is a nationwide issue (if not larger) that it can be affected on the local level until every local level follows suit and it becomes nationwide as a result.

In what ways can the City of Santa Monica better protect its undocumented residents?

The city can help undocumented residents by providing them with services such as health and financial access and protection from raids. However, it should discourage additional undocumented residency so the effort to improve the existing community doesn't become harder as time passes.

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?

I plan to speak out on behalf of the victims of injustice. This is my purpose, to fight for justice on behalf of the human race.

What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

I have dealt with this all my life as a Black man and I use assertive communication in stating what I believe was intended, the reason, the alternate perspective and the outcome and a proposed solution.

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

The most significant environmental justice issue are our people who I see as part of the environment. Santa Monica has led the nation in environmental efforts, but I believe it is time to

redirect some of that attention to the people who are suffering in the streets every day and the victims of the outbursts this suffrage may cause. As a result, you will find that people will care more for themselves and in turn, care more for their environment and the environment will continue to thrive.

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?






I believe the city does a good job with diversity employment in City staff and I would encourage there to be strong programs for people development to ensure people get place and have the support they need to get the career they want.

## **Housing / Development**

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

My major proposal is the DIGS program which is slightly modeled after the New Leaf project which worked successfully in Vancouver. New Leaf gave cash transfers to people suffering from homelessness along with counseling and coaching which saw a major move towards housing in an average of three months. However, that was using private money, so with public money, DIGS would do that but add some accountability measures so the taxpayer feels confident they are making a sound investment. DIGS stands for Demerits In addition to Gold Stars and would track a person's ability to meet acts of self-love criteria such as eating, sleeping, exercising, optional sacred time, seeking counseling, seeking employment if applicable and seeking housing. This performance-based system gives the case worker and the individual to define a score for each day on a scale of 1-5 which would get averaged at the end of the week and decide whether the person gets a cash transfer. At the end of nine weeks, the cash transfer would be for the entire rest of the year all at once. This would work because it is time to start treating homeless like people because people in all other facets of life are driven by incentives. There is a certain portion of the homeless population, recently unhoused, which this would work for particularly. Here is a diagram of the program:

### How DIGS Would Work...

DIGS Score	Wks 1-2	Wks 3-8	Wk 9 Lump Sum Payout
5 	\$89.23/Wk	\$111.54/Wk	\$5,800 - Wk 1-8 Earnings
4 	\$89.23/Wk	\$89.23/Wk	\$4,640 - Wk 1-8 Earnings
3 	\$89.23/Wk	\$00.00/Wk	\$00.00
2 	\$89.23/Wk	\$00.00/Wk	\$00.00
1 	\$89.23/Wk	\$00.00/Wk	\$00.00

A year-long program of counseling in which the first two weeks have cash transfers and the following seven weeks have potential cash transfers based on the rolling average of the participant's DIGS Score. Numbers round up at .5 or greater. Participants receive a daily score administered by a case worker based on completion of acts of self-love such as eating, sleeping, exercising, attending counseling and optional sacred time. Daily scores get averaged at the end of the week, determining the payout. At week 9, the payout is delivered as a lump sum.

Beyond DIGS I would promote the search for service providers who provide results. I would audit them and if they don't deliver, I would fire them because people's lives are at stake.

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

Development should be to meet the need for the objective at hand so that the character of the city is preserved. We need to maintain our low-rise character. So, more housing can be accomplished through upzoning, rezoning and deregulating for the sake of more efficient land use. We need to hold our leaders accountable so there is no corruption within the real estate industry. We need to use structures and space that is not currently being used for housing, for housing. There is a growing issue of residential vacancies causing a lack of housing as well that I would be willing to enact laws to decrease.

In what specific ways has Santa Monica failed to address the housing affordability crisis?

Santa Monica's land value increased faster than the actions by government to preserve people's ability to stay-in-place. There needs to be an effort to manufacture affordability by using rent-control, affordable housing, inclusionary housing and vouchers so that all levels of income are able to live here. There should be a hold on housing for the top tier of income earners until the income levels become more balanced and Santa Monica can afford for this to happen for quite some time.

What concrete steps would you take on Council to better address the crisis?

I would support measures that manufacture affordability so that low income, medium income earners and existing residents can move and stay here. I believe we should enable more home-sharing and offer rebates for parking so residents of the city don't have to pay as much as visitors for the same services.

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?

Cap the freeway! It can also meet this goal by being creative and finding locations that are not currently being used for housing, for housing. This means second rooms in commercial storefronts. Second and third stories on one level buildings and converting commercial buildings into partitioned housing units. It also needs to upzone, rezone and deregulate for the sake of efficient land use. I believe city council should negotiate with HCD and meet other criteria such as diversity increases and stress level decreases to enable some relief on the unit requirement as well.



What is your assessment of the 2022 Housing Element proposed by City Council?

I believe it was done just to meet compliancy requirements by HCD.

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?

I am pro Airbnb and I would fight on behalf of the resident. There needs to be protection for the landlord but there are already members on city council who protect landlords. The commercial vacancy tax would help benefit residential landlords. Other efforts I'm fighting for support the resident such as upzoning, rezoning and deregulating for the sake of efficient land use.

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

Rent control is on a mission to provide stability but its limitation is that it keeps low income residents out, forcing them to live in low income communities and subject to witness crime on a daily basis. Therefore rent control cannot be the only solution. We need other supplementary programs such as affordable housing, inclusionary housing, support for middle class and section 8 so that the community can be diverse, and we can all reap the benefits of living here.

## **Public Safety**

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

Public safety reform and oversight commission is important to keep an expert eye view of public safety which is paramount for our community. Their role is to always inform city council and the community at large of the state of safety so council can work with the community and make decisions in the city's best interest.

What is your assessment of the OCR 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?

I am not certain what OCR Report this is referring to but if it is in regards to the formation of the Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission, I am for it.

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?

We need to lobby for the repeal of Prop 47 and Prop 57 because they are leading to the death of drug users, increased crime and innocent people getting attacked and robbed. As an elected official, I would use my platform to do this. And, we need more police whose presence would deter crime.

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

SMPD is not well funded because they are understaffed. We heard the police chief say Tuesday that they need more people, better technology and better tools. More of the city budget should be allocated to hiring SMPD officers until they are fully staffed.

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?

We do need more mental health services for internal PD and FD employees as well as field psychologists who can work with the public. I don't think we need to take money from one to provide for the other. Both are very important and public safety is of utmost importance.

Do you support or oppose efforts to recall District Attorney George Gascón?

I support efforts to recall Gascon because his policies are too liberal and are hurting Americans—and I'm referring to Prop 47, 57 and bail.

Do you support DA Gascón's special directives on restorative justice? If not, what approach should be taken?

I don't support these directives because justice should be provided to the underserved but not through the allowance of behavior that is detrimental to their health. There needs to be education so that people know what to do with their freedom on top of freedom itself. There needs to be consequences for behavior that hurts a person's self and their community to deter them from doing these behaviors. The approach that should be taken instead is mass education and a focus on mental health, as well as efforts to address communities that are 'most help needed' until we are all on an equal playing field. I call this approach situational development. This means because the black community, to me, has the biggest hurdle to overcome since we used to be slaves that propelled the nation to financial superiority, have not received an apology or compensation from our government and the trait that makes us different is immediately visible and causes us to continue seeing greater discrimination than other groups, this group's situation makes it the priority. When this group excels, the next group can receive attention which would be Latinos, women, Asians, LGBTQ+, Jews, disabled, non-believers and more. The goal should be to remove the victim mindset but we must be frank with ourselves and serve justice for injustices rendered which may set the community back financially but as a result, American ingenuity will prevail but this time without the outbursts that slow us down such as protests and riots in response to institutional racism and gun violence as a result of mental health, which to me, mental health specifically, affects Americans of all races because we know our racists history hasn't been addressed but keep moving forward without addressing it appropriately.

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?

Yes. My position was that it was right to not implement it at the time as well. The city must not try to lead the way and be too liberal but rather do what's best for the community considering all factors. Though it was a deadly disease, its effectiveness was much lower and life was able to function with businesses being open.

## **Mobility**

Should Santa Monica encourage more pedestrian-only streets like the Third Street Promenade?

I think one pedestrian-only street is enough and we should focus on its recovery.

If so, on which streets would you consider this?

None.

Do you support additional Metro rail lines being built in Santa Monica, and if so, which potential projects do you support?

None. But in Brentwood, yes.

Which regions of the City would you like to see serviced?

None.

Should shared mobility devices and apps (eg, scooters, e-bikes) be encouraged or discouraged in Santa Monica?

Encouraged. They were born here and this should be a point of pride. It just must be well managed.

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?

Building requirements for parking should be decreased however street parking should stay at current capacity and rates should be lowered for residents.

## **Ballot Measures**

Do you support California Proposition 1? 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? Yes. More money and allocations defined.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not? No. Not as much money as the other measure and allocations are too vague.

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

Do you support the SMC bond measure? No.

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

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure?  
Yes.

## 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? Yes, I think its good for the nation. Inflation is affecting so many people and we need relief.

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.

I Support these measures. We need to ensure the progress the country has made in equality be preserved.

Do you think we need the **Protecting Access to Medication Abortion Act** (S 4467)?

Yes, we need to protect access to medication abortion.

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)?

Yes. We all need access to medical care.

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

I think if we tax the highest earners and hold them accountable to the rest of the community, despite the ability to offshore but rather highlight the benefits of social entrepreneurship and comprehensive health increase so that they want to give, it would help, but this would be on the federal level.

## Additional Questions

What steps must Santa Monica take to enact a Green New Deal in our own city, if any? Santa Monica has a goal to be Carbon Neutral by 2050 and this is a good goal.

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?

This is the case because stakeholders do not want to see Santa Monica be associated with drugs. This should be changed because Santa Monica is losing out on tax money because residents still buy marijuana and many people find it useful.

If dispensaries are allowed in Santa Monica, what processes would govern the business approval process to ensure equity?

I believe part of the marijuana initiative in Santa Monica should be a focus on relieving current and former prisoners in jail and prison for marijuana related crimes. Besides that, we should offer a set amount of licenses that hopeful business owners can bid on to ensure there are not so many dispensaries as to tarnish the city's image.

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City?

Democratic Club plays the important role of being a local resource for the national party so many of us belong to. It should step in when Santa Monica falls out of lines with Democratic values and lobby on Santa Monica's behalf for support from democrats in other cities.

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 would consult with SMDC and other organizations to get their take on proposal ideas and hear what ideas the organizations have so I can always be prepared, informed and engaged with my community.