

Santa Monica Democratic Club

2026 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

General Information

Candidate Name: Ashley Oelsen

Email Address: vote4ashleyo@gmail.com

Candidate's Current Occupation: Environmental Consulting

Candidate's Employer: Self-Employed

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): Dveen Babaian

1. What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I bring a combination of scientific expertise, public service experience, community advocacy, and proven leadership. I am a conservation biologist with advanced graduate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania (Environmental Science, with a certificate in Animal Welfare and Behavior) and USC (History and Policy), where I developed a strong foundation in evidence-based policymaking and environmental health. My work has taken me around the world conducting field research in Tanzania, Borneo, and Iceland, collaborating with organizations dedicated to protecting wildlife, public health, and natural resources.

In Santa Monica, I currently serve on the Environmental Justice, Sustainability, and Environment Commission and previously chaired the Clean Oceans and Beaches Measure V Oversight Committee, where I worked to ensure public funds were used responsibly and effectively. These roles have given me firsthand experience reviewing policies, budgets, public programs, and community concerns while collaborating with residents, staff, and elected officials.

I have worked with organizations including the International Fund for Animal Welfare, advocated for environmental policy before Congress, and served as a Directorate Fellow with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Following the Palisades Fire, I founded the Coastal Alliance to bring together scientists, residents, environmental advocates, and community stakeholders to address public health and environmental impacts affecting our coastline, including coordinating systematic monitoring of PAH, PCB, dioxin, and heavy metals in Santa Monica Bay. A documentary on my work received a Patagonia Film Festival Award for Best Environmental Story.

I also serve as a board member of the Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated a commitment to transparency, accountability, scientific integrity, and public engagement.

2. Why are you running?

I am running because Santa Monica needs leaders who are willing to put the community ahead of politics, follow the science, and make decisions based on facts, transparency, and long-term public benefit.

My commitment to public service comes from a lifelong passion for protecting both people and the environment. As a conservation biologist, environmental advocate, and community leader, I have spent my career working on issues that directly affect public health, quality of life, and the future of our community. Through my service on the Environmental Justice, Sustainability, and Environment Commission and as Chair of the Clean Oceans and Beaches Measure V Oversight Committee, I have seen both the strengths of our city and the challenges we must address.

I am also the founder of Santa Monica Neighbors, a civic accountability organization. I have spent considerable time filing public records requests, analyzing government conduct, and documenting accountability failures that have eroded public trust. Residents deserve a council member who takes that responsibility seriously.

The recent environmental and public health challenges facing our coastline reinforced for me the importance of strong local leadership. In response, I founded the Coastal Alliance to bring together residents, scientists, and advocates to protect our beaches, ocean, and public health. That experience showed me the power of community action and the need for elected officials who are willing to listen, collaborate, and act when residents' concerns are being overlooked.

3. What are the top issues of your campaign, and how do they differ from other candidates in this race? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

My campaign is organized around four pillars: Sustainable Safety, Transparent Government, Fiscal Health and City Vibrancy, and Environment and Coastline.

On sustainable safety, I believe there should be a focus on accountability, public safety, and genuine pathways to care. We must confront homelessness with measurable outcomes and ensure that every dollar invested in human services produces a documented result for the individual it is meant to serve.

On transparent government, Santa Monica needs a government that is more responsive and accountable to residents. I will advocate for greater transparency, meaningful public participation, measurable outcomes for City programs, and stronger oversight of public spending. I have documented specific accountability failures through public records and will bring that same rigor to the Council.

On fiscal health and city vibrancy, I am focused on a broader cost of living challenge that affects working families, seniors, young people, and small businesses. This includes the City's fiscal deterioration, commercial vacancies, and the need for policies that produce measurable improvements in affordability and economic opportunity. I have actively opposed AB 1740, legislation collaboratively drafted between Assembly Member Zbur's office and Santa Monica city staff that would have undermined the Coastal Act and local planning authority.

On environment and coastline, as a conservation biologist and founder of the Coastal Alliance, I have spent years working on environmental health, climate resilience, water quality, and coastal protection. Science-based policies should guide these decisions.

What differentiates me from many candidates is that I approach these issues through the lens of data, science, accountability, and measurable outcomes. I have a documented track record of independent advocacy on behalf of residents, including work that has sometimes put me in direct conflict with sitting Council members.

4. Please list all endorsements received to date (individual and organizational).

Individual Endorsements

Lana Negrete, Santa Monica City Councilmember and Former Mayor
Ray Jackson, Hermosa Beach City Councilmember and California Coastal Commissioner
Christine Parra, Former Santa Monica City Councilmember

Public Support

Traci Park, Los Angeles City Councilmember

Organizational Endorsements

Formal endorsement processes are currently ongoing.

5. How long have you lived in Santa Monica? Where else have you lived?

I've lived in Santa Monica over 15 years: 2006-2015 and again from February 2020 - present.

Between 2015-2020, I moved away for graduate school, field research and career growth, living in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Tanzania and Borneo.

I grew up in San Diego County, living in Cardiff By The Sea and Pacific Beach. I spent two years studying in San Francisco before moving to Los Angeles to complete my undergraduate degree at USC.

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

Yes.

7. What is your history of watching, attending, or speaking at Santa Monica City Council meetings? (If incumbent, prior to your own service.)

My history attending and participating at Santa Monica City Council meetings is frequent and often. I regularly speak at meetings, highlighting factual public record, background research and relevant data. I often watch the meetings I am unable to attend in person.

Campaign Finance

1. How much money have you raised for your campaign to date?

\$20,000

2. How much do you intend to raise by Election Day 2026?

\$120,000

3. Candidates for local office often choose not to take campaign contributions from particular types of organizations or industries who are out of step with their own values. Are there any such sources from which you would decline donations? If so, which?

Yes. I believe elected officials should be accountable first and foremost to the residents they serve. To maintain public trust and avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, I would decline contributions from industries and organizations whose business practices are fundamentally inconsistent with my values of environmental stewardship, public health, animal welfare, transparency, and ethical governance.

This includes contributions from entities with a documented history of significant environmental violations, animal cruelty, corruption, fraud, or repeated violations of public trust. I would also decline contributions that could reasonably create the appearance that my decisions as an elected official are being influenced by special interests rather than the interests of Santa Monica residents.

I will not accept contributions from fossil fuel companies or corporate PACs. Residents should have confidence that my decisions are guided by science, ethics, and the interests of the community rather than special interests.

Party / Activism

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

I have been a registered Democrat since 2001, when I was first able to vote. I have never been registered with another political party. I have been told that my registration once showed Decline to State in Political Data Information (PDI), but I have never seen evidence of this designation. I will be posting my entire voter history from the CA Secretary of State on my candidate website for full transparency.

2. 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?

Yes. I have volunteered and worked on Democratic campaigns at the local and national levels, including Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and voter outreach efforts in Georgia during the 2020, 2022, and 2024 election cycles.

During Barack Obama's campaign, my uncle served as an official presidential elector in Pennsylvania, and I worked closely with him. My work included voter contact, grassroots organizing, fundraising, and Get Out The Vote efforts.

Locally, I worked on the 2024 Santa Monica City Council campaigns of John Putnam and Dr. Vivian Roknian.

In addition to campaign work, I have lobbied members of Congress on Capitol Hill on environmental and animal welfare issues, including advocacy supporting the Big Cat Public Safety Act. I currently serve as a board member of the Animal Welfare Enforcement Initiative ballot measure effort. Through Santa Monica Neighbors, I have organized civic education programs, filed CPRA requests, and conducted accountability work on local governance.

3. Which political candidates and/or ballot measures have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible, especially where you endorsed during a contested primary.

- Barack Obama
- Joe Biden
- Kamala Harris
- Al Gore
- Alexandra Ociosso Cortez
- Raphael Warnock
- John Ossoff
- Pete Buttigieg
- Stacey Abrams
- Traci Park

4. 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.

No.

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

- Santa Monica Democratic Club, Member
- Santa Monica for Renters Rights, Member
- The Coastal Alliance, Executive Director
- Santa Monica Neighbors, Director
- Santa Monica Helping Hub, Vice President
- Santa Monica Bay Audubon, Board Member
- The Animal Welfare Enforcement Initiative, Board of Advisors
- World Education Connection, Board Member
- The Sierra Club, Member
- Surfers Who Serve, Advisor

6. Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found below. List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree.

Yes. I have reviewed the California Democratic Party Platform.

I support the platform's commitment to protecting civil rights, reproductive freedom, environmental stewardship, public education, economic opportunity, worker protections, and democratic participation.

As with any broad policy platform, there are areas where I may differ on implementation strategies or policy approaches. My focus is on how policies are implemented, measured, and evaluated. I believe government should be accountable for outcomes, not simply intentions, and I support regularly assessing whether policies are achieving their stated goals.

I support the values and objectives reflected in the platform and share its commitment to building a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive California.

City Governance

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

The City Council has faced an unusually challenging set of circumstances, including recovery from the pandemic, homelessness, public safety concerns, budget pressures, and more recently the impacts of the Palisades Fire. I appreciate the work that council members and staff have done to navigate these complex issues.

At the same time, I believe there is room for significant improvement in transparency, public engagement, and responsiveness to residents. There are instances where the Council has acted without adequate public notice, moved major policy decisions through without meaningful community input, and in some cases advanced legislation that appears to have been collaboratively drafted with parties outside the public process.

I believe Santa Monica has an opportunity to strengthen public trust, improve accountability, and foster greater collaboration between residents, staff, and elected officials as we address the challenges facing our community.

2. What changes, if any, would you support to make Santa Monica's system of government more democratic, representative, transparent, or effective? Please discuss any structural or governance reforms you would be interested in exploring.

I support reforms that increase transparency, public participation, and accountability. Residents should have meaningful opportunities to participate in decision making before major policies are adopted, not after decisions have effectively been made.

I would support expanding public engagement, improving access to City information, increasing transparency around legislative advocacy positions, strengthening performance metrics for City programs, and ensuring that residents can more easily understand how decisions are being made and how public funds are being spent.

I am also interested in exploring ways to improve oversight, increase accountability for City-funded programs, and ensure that policy decisions are regularly evaluated based on measurable outcomes. The City's approach to public comment has narrowed in recent years, and I would support restoring more meaningful participation, including returning to comment periods that allow residents adequate time to present complex concerns.

3. How can Santa Monica better collaborate with neighboring cities and LA County on regional challenges such as homelessness, housing, and transportation?

Homelessness, housing, and transportation are regional challenges that require coordination among cities, LA County, Metro, and other agencies. Santa Monica should continue to be an active partner in developing solutions and advocating for the resources our residents deserve.

At the same time, collaboration should not mean surrendering local control or accepting a disproportionate share of responsibilities that should be distributed more equitably across the region. Santa Monica has long invested significant resources in human services and supportive programs, and it is important that neighboring jurisdictions and LA County do their fair share as well.

Regional partnerships are most successful when they are based on shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and measurable outcomes.

4. How do you assess Santa Monica's current approach to public input on legislative advocacy, and communication with residents on major policy decisions? What specific steps would you take to strengthen public trust, transparency, and accountability in City decision-making?

I believe Santa Monica's current approach needs serious improvement. Residents often feel that major policy decisions are made without enough public discussion, meaningful input, or clear communication about the reasoning behind those decisions. Public trust depends on residents feeling heard, even when they disagree with the Council or City staff.

I would support restoring more meaningful public comment at City Council meetings, including returning to the prior system rather than routinely limiting speakers to one minute. One minute is often insufficient for residents to explain complex concerns, particularly on issues involving housing, homelessness, development, public safety, environmental policy, and legislative advocacy.

I would also support earlier public engagement before major policy decisions are made, clearer explanations of legislative positions the City is considering, more accessible staff reports and supporting documents, and better follow-up with residents after decisions are made. The City's approach to legislative advocacy, including the process that led to the collaborative drafting of AB 1740 with outside parties, is an example of where greater transparency and accountability are needed.

5. City policies often succeed or fail at the implementation stage. Please describe a specific example from your own experience of how you would ensure a major City initiative is effectively executed once adopted.

Following the Palisades Fire, I became concerned about potential impacts to coastal water quality, beach sand, and public health. Rather than simply advocating for action, I worked with scientists, laboratories, community members, government agencies, and elected officials to collect environmental samples, analyze data, communicate findings to the public, and advocate for evidence-based responses. Santa Monica Canyon was confirmed as the primary contamination pathway for PAH, PCB, dioxin, and heavy metals entering Santa Monica Bay.

That experience reinforced the importance of implementation. Setting goals is only the first step. Successful execution requires clear performance metrics, transparent reporting, regular public updates, coordination among stakeholders, and accountability when results fall short of expectations.

If elected, I would apply that same approach to City initiatives. For any major program, I would advocate for clear objectives, measurable outcomes, regular progress reports, and opportunities for public feedback throughout implementation, not just during policy adoption.

Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

1. In light of increasing federal threats to democratic institutions and civil liberties, what role should local governments like Santa Monica play in protecting democratic norms and residents' rights?

Local governments play an important role in protecting civil liberties, promoting transparency, and ensuring that all residents are treated fairly and with dignity under the law. At a time when public trust in institutions is declining, local governments should demonstrate a commitment to open government, due process, equal protection, and meaningful public participation.

Santa Monica should continue to safeguard residents' constitutional rights, support transparency in decision making, protect access to public information, and ensure that residents have meaningful opportunities to engage with their government. We should also advocate for policies that protect vulnerable communities from discrimination and ensure that City services are delivered fairly and equitably.

I am concerned that opportunities for meaningful public participation have been reduced in recent years. Democratic institutions are strongest when they welcome robust debate, encourage civic engagement, and respect dissenting opinions. In light of Republican attacks on long established democratic norms and vital civil liberties, local governments like Santa Monica serve as the backbone for upholding democratic principles, public trust and community power.

2. What role should the City play in supporting and uplifting Black communities in Santa Monica, addressing past inequities, and ensuring that Black residents continue to have a meaningful presence and voice in the City's future?

Santa Monica has a responsibility to acknowledge and learn from its history, including policies and practices that contributed to the displacement and marginalization of Black

residents. The City should work to ensure that Black residents continue to have a meaningful presence, voice, and opportunity to thrive in our community.

I believe that starts with listening to Black residents and community leaders, preserving and celebrating Santa Monica's Black history and cultural institutions, and ensuring that City policies are evaluated for their impact on historically underrepresented communities.

The City should continue to support equitable access to housing, economic opportunity, education, public services, and civic participation. It is also important that Black residents have meaningful representation in public decision making processes, including commissions, boards, advisory groups, and community engagement efforts.

3. In what ways can/should the City of Santa Monica protect its immigrant communities from federal enforcement raids in our community?

Santa Monica should continue to ensure that all residents, regardless of immigration status, feel safe accessing essential City services, reporting crimes, seeking emergency assistance, and participating in community life.

The City can continue to play an important role in protecting residents' rights by fostering trust between immigrant communities and local government, providing accurate information about their legal protections, supporting access to legal resources, and ensuring City policies comply with California law.

I believe local public safety efforts are most effective when residents feel comfortable interacting with City departments and law enforcement without fear.

4. What role should the City Council play in addressing historical inequities and ongoing concerns about displacement, economic opportunity, and community investment in the Pico Neighborhood?

The Pico Neighborhood has a unique history and cultural significance in Santa Monica, and the City has a responsibility to ensure that long-time residents and community institutions are not left behind as the City evolves.

I believe the City Council should work closely with Pico residents, businesses, community organizations, and neighborhood leaders to identify priorities and ensure that investments reflect the community's needs. I am also concerned about displacement and the loss of long-standing community connections.

While many policies are implemented with the best intentions, we should also recognize that concentrating a disproportionate share of affordable housing, human services programs, and other public facilities within a single neighborhood can unintentionally reinforce inequities rather than reduce them. The City should strive for a more equitable distribution of services and community investments across Santa Monica.

5. What role should the City of Santa Monica play in protecting and supporting LGBTQ+ residents, particularly at a time of increasing political and legal attacks on LGBTQ+ rights nationally?

Santa Monica should remain unequivocally committed to protecting and supporting LGBTQ+ residents and ensuring that every member of our community is treated with dignity, respect, and equal protection under the law.

Our community has a long history of inclusion, and the City should continue to foster an environment where LGBTQ+ residents feel welcome and safe. The City's role is to ensure equal access to services, prevent discrimination, support community organizations, and promote policies that protect the civil rights and well-being of all residents.

6. 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 support efforts to recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce that reflects the community Santa Monica serves. I would work collaboratively with the City Manager to review recruitment, mentorship, and professional development programs to ensure that opportunities are accessible to qualified candidates from a wide range of backgrounds.

I am particularly interested in initiatives that promote coastal access, environmental education, workforce development, business education, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. These investments can help create long-term opportunity and empower individuals and families in tangible ways. Diversity and inclusion efforts should be measured by outcomes, not intentions.

Economic Development

1. Beyond housing, what should the City do to address cost of living and support a sustainable local economy, including small businesses and workers?

Addressing affordability requires a broader strategy than housing alone. The City should focus on supporting small businesses, strengthening local job opportunities, investing in workforce development, and ensuring that Santa Monica remains an attractive place to live, work, and do business.

I support reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens on small businesses, streamlining permitting processes, and creating incentives that attract and retain businesses in Santa Monica. Too often, businesses face increasing costs, fees, taxes, and administrative hurdles that make it more difficult to operate successfully in our city.

I also believe we need to carefully evaluate whether our policies are achieving their intended outcomes. Before imposing new requirements or costs, the City should consider the real-world impacts on small businesses, workers, consumers, and the overall economic health of the community. If a policy is not producing the results we intended, we should be willing to reassess and make adjustments.

2. What specific strategies would you pursue in the next four years to address commercial vacancies and support the long-term vitality of Downtown Santa Monica?

Revitalizing Downtown Santa Monica should be one of the City's top economic priorities. We need a strategy that attracts new businesses, supports existing businesses, improves the visitor experience, and restores confidence in Downtown as a place to shop, work, dine, and spend time.

I would focus on reducing barriers to doing business by streamlining permitting processes, reviewing fees and regulations, and making it easier for businesses to open and expand. I would actively recruit businesses and entrepreneurs that complement Santa Monica's unique character, including locally owned businesses, creative industries, technology, hospitality, health and wellness, and environmentally focused enterprises.

We also need to ensure that Downtown is clean, safe, welcoming, and accessible. Public spaces should be well maintained and activated with events, cultural programming, and community activities.

A few specific strategies include:

Property Tax Rebates — Rebate or credit to owners who sign leases with operating businesses; additional incentives for local/first-time entrepreneurs

Tenant Improvement Matching Grants — Match upgrade investments (ADA, facade, HVAC, electrical, permits) to lower the barrier to leasing

Temporary Occupancy Incentives — Waived fees and streamlined approvals for pop-ups, galleries, nonprofits, and seasonal businesses

Commercial Rent Abatement — Tax credit or grant to landlords who offer below-market rents to new businesses

3. What is your assessment of Santa Monica's Entertainment Zone program thus far? Has it been successful in supporting economic activity and Downtown vitality, and would you support expanding the program to additional areas of the City? If so, where? Why or why not?

I support innovative efforts to increase activity and economic vitality in Downtown Santa Monica, and I believe the Entertainment Zone should be evaluated based on measurable outcomes. The City should examine business participation, visitor activity, public safety impacts, revenue generation, and community feedback to determine whether the program is achieving its intended goals.

If the program demonstrates clear benefits and can be managed responsibly, I would be open to exploring expansion in carefully selected locations. Any expansion should involve community input, consideration of impacts on nearby residents and businesses, and a commitment to maintaining public safety and quality of life.

Housing / Development

1. How would you describe the housing affordability crisis (or crises) facing Santa Monica and the region, and what do you see as their primary causes?

Santa Monica and the broader region face a housing affordability crisis, but I believe it is also part of a larger cost of living crisis. Many residents are struggling not only with housing costs, but also with rising expenses for transportation, childcare, insurance, healthcare, and everyday necessities.

The causes are complex and cannot be attributed to any single factor. They include a long-term imbalance between housing supply and demand, rising construction and financing costs, regulatory barriers, economic inequality, and broader market forces affecting the entire region.

I also believe we need to be honest about the limitations of any single solution. Housing policy should be evaluated based on whether it is actually improving affordability for residents, not simply by how many units are approved.

2. In what specific ways has Santa Monica succeeded or fallen short in addressing housing affordability and homelessness, and what policy approaches would you prioritize to address these challenges?

Santa Monica has invested significant resources in housing affordability, homelessness services, and human services programs, and I recognize that many people working in this space are deeply committed. However, despite the amount of money, staff time, and programs dedicated to these issues, we have not achieved the outcomes residents were promised or that vulnerable individuals need.

I believe Santa Monica has fallen short because we have too often measured success by how much we spend, how many programs we create, or how many units we approve, rather than by clear, measurable outcomes. We need to ask whether people are actually being housed, whether homelessness is decreasing, and whether residents are seeing results.

Going forward, I would prioritize stronger accountability for all funded programs. On housing, I support policies that protect existing residents, prevent displacement, and create housing that is actually affordable to the people who need it most. On homelessness, I support compassionate but accountable approaches that connect people to services while also addressing real impacts on neighborhoods, businesses, parks, and public safety.

3. Which state or regional policies or legislative approaches do you view as most relevant to addressing housing affordability and housing production in Santa Monica, and why?

State housing laws and Regional Housing Needs Assessment requirements have become major drivers of local housing policy and will continue to shape Santa Monica's future. While I understand the state's desire to address California's housing shortage, I believe local communities should retain meaningful input into how housing goals are achieved.

The most important question is not simply how many units are produced, but whether policies are actually improving affordability. We should evaluate state and regional approaches based on measurable outcomes, including housing affordability, displacement prevention, infrastructure capacity, transportation impacts, environmental sustainability, and quality of life.

I am also deeply concerned about legislation like AB 1740, which would have undermined the Coastal Act and imposed overreaching state land use mandates without meaningful local input or coastal protection. My documented opposition to that bill reflects my broader view that state housing legislation must not override hard-won environmental and community protections.

4. In considering state-mandated housing requirements, what is your philosophy on how and where new housing should be constructed, and how should authority be balanced between state and local control? Do you believe Santa Monica should accommodate substantially more housing growth over the next decade? Why or why not?

I believe the central challenge facing Santa Monica is affordability. While housing supply is part of the conversation, the ultimate goal should be ensuring that people who live and work here can actually afford to remain here.

Santa Monica is a unique coastal city with finite land, aging infrastructure, significant environmental constraints, and a high demand for housing driven by factors that extend well beyond our city boundaries. I support thoughtful housing growth, particularly in locations where infrastructure, transportation, public services, and environmental considerations can support it.

Local governments should retain meaningful authority over land use decisions. The state has a legitimate role in addressing California's housing challenges, but one-size-fits-all mandates often fail to account for the unique conditions facing individual communities, including coastal environmental constraints and the protections provided by the Coastal Act.

5. Did you support SB 79 before it included any protections for existing rent-controlled housing and its tenants? Why or why not? Do you believe the anti-displacement provisions of SB 79 as adopted go far enough? Why or why not? Do you believe Santa Monica ought to implement greater protections for existing rent-controlled units and their tenants than SB 79 provides? Why or why not?

No. I was concerned that the bill emphasized housing production without providing sufficient protections for existing rent-controlled housing and long-term tenants. Any policy that significantly alters local land use authority should include strong safeguards against displacement and the loss of existing affordable housing.

No. While the inclusion of anti-displacement provisions was an improvement, I remain concerned that the protections do not fully address the risks facing tenants in rent-controlled housing and other vulnerable residents. Once existing affordable units are lost, they are extremely difficult to replace.

Yes. Santa Monica has one of the largest and most important rent-controlled housing stocks in California, and protecting those units should be a priority. Preserving existing affordable housing is often more effective and less costly than attempting to replace it after it has been lost. I support exploring additional local protections that help prevent displacement and provide greater housing stability for long-term residents.

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

The primary purpose of Rent Control is to provide housing stability, prevent displacement, and preserve economic diversity in a community where the majority of residents are renters.

In a city like Santa Monica, rent-controlled housing helps ensure that working families, seniors, people with disabilities, young professionals, service workers, educators, and long-time residents are able to remain part of the community despite rising housing costs and market pressures.

I view Rent Control as one of the City's most important affordability tools. I am a renter in Santa Monica with nearly six decades of family roots in this city, and I understand from direct experience what housing stability means for long-term residents.

7. What role should tenant protections, such as eviction protections for nonpayment of rent or right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, play in the city's overall housing strategy? Do you favor expansion of the newly adopted right to counsel program, and if so, how would you fund such an expansion?

Tenant protections play an important role in promoting housing stability, preventing unnecessary displacement, and ensuring that residents understand and can exercise their legal rights. In a city where a large percentage of residents are renters, housing stability should be an important component of our overall housing strategy.

At the same time, housing policy should recognize that many Santa Monica landlords are not large corporations. Many are small property owners, immigrant families, retirees, and long-time residents who rely on rental income. Well-intentioned tenant protection policies can sometimes create unintended consequences that disproportionately impact these small property owners.

With respect to the newly adopted right to counsel program, I believe it is important to first evaluate its effectiveness before considering expansion. The City should collect and publicly report data on program utilization, case outcomes, housing retention rates, costs, and overall impact. Decisions about expansion should be based on measurable results.

8. Based on results from the first few years of implementation, do you believe that 2022's Measure GS should be amended? If so, how and why?

I believe it is appropriate to periodically evaluate Measure GS based on its actual results and whether it is achieving its intended goals. Any voter-approved measure should be assessed using objective data, measurable outcomes, and community feedback.

My approach is not to begin with the assumption that Measure GS should or should not be amended. Rather, I believe we should examine how it has affected housing production, affordability, displacement, neighborhood impacts, infrastructure, public services, and overall quality of life. If the evidence shows that certain provisions are not producing the intended outcomes or are creating significant unintended consequences, then I would be open to considering targeted amendments.

9. Are you committed to using the public land identified in the existing Housing Element to generate the number of deed-restricted affordable housing units identified? How else do you believe the City should create below market-rate housing in Santa Monica?

I support using public land to create deed-restricted affordable housing where it makes sense and where projects can demonstrate meaningful affordability, fiscal responsibility, and community benefit. Public land is one of the City's most valuable assets, and decisions regarding its use should be evaluated carefully to ensure the greatest long-term public benefit.

In addition to utilizing appropriate public land, I believe Santa Monica should prioritize preserving existing affordable and rent-controlled housing, preventing displacement, encouraging rehabilitation of existing housing stock, supporting adaptive reuse where appropriate, and exploring partnerships with nonprofit and affordable housing developers.

10. Do you support an expansion of Santa Monica's ongoing financial assistance program to additional severely rent-burdened and/or rent-burdened households? If so, to whom would you expand the program and how would you finance the expansion?

Financial assistance can play an important role in helping residents avoid displacement and maintain housing stability, particularly during periods of economic hardship. However, before expanding any program, the City should evaluate its effectiveness, identify measurable outcomes, and ensure that resources are being used efficiently.

If the program is demonstrating clear success, I would be open to considering targeted expansion for the most vulnerable residents, including seniors, people with disabilities, extremely low-income households, and residents facing temporary financial crises that place them at immediate risk of losing housing.

Public Safety

1. How would you assess public safety and quality of life in Santa Monica today? What specific trends concern you most, and where do you see progress?

Santa Monica remains a remarkable community, but many residents have concerns about public safety and quality of life that should not be dismissed. Public safety is about more than crime statistics alone. It is also about whether people feel safe using parks, visiting downtown, riding transit, walking through their neighborhoods, and enjoying public spaces.

The issues that concern me most are persistent homelessness, untreated mental illness and substance abuse, property crime, and the impacts these challenges can have on residents, businesses, visitors, and public spaces. I am also concerned about declining public confidence when residents feel their concerns are not being heard or adequately addressed.

At the same time, I believe there has been progress in acknowledging these challenges and investing resources to address them. There is growing recognition that public safety, homelessness, mental health, and quality of life are interconnected issues that require coordinated solutions.

2. What specific steps should be taken in the next two years to improve public safety in Santa Monica? If additional funding is required, how should it be allocated across policing, unarmed response, and prevention programs? What metrics should the City use to evaluate success?

In the next two years, Santa Monica should focus on visible, measurable improvements in public safety and quality of life. That includes ensuring adequate police staffing and response times, expanding effective unarmed response where appropriate, improving coordination with mental health and substance abuse services, and addressing repeat problems in parks, downtown, transit areas, and commercial districts.

If additional funding is required, it should be allocated based on demonstrated need and measurable outcomes rather than ideology. Police should be supported in responding to crime, violence, and situations requiring law enforcement. Unarmed response teams should be used for calls involving behavioral health, homelessness outreach, and nonviolent situations where they are effective and safe.

The City should evaluate success using clear metrics, including response times, crime trends, repeat calls for service, outcomes of unarmed response calls, referrals to treatment or housing, reductions in encampments and public space disruptions, and whether people feel safer in their neighborhoods and public spaces.

Environment & Climate

1. What steps should Santa Monica take in the next four years to prepare for climate impacts such as extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and sea level rise?

Santa Monica should prioritize climate adaptation and resilience alongside emissions reduction. This includes expanding urban tree canopy and cooling infrastructure to address extreme heat, improving public health preparedness and air quality monitoring during wildfire smoke events, protecting vulnerable populations, strengthening emergency response capabilities, and investing in coastal resilience planning to address sea level rise and storm impacts.

The City should continue to use science-based decision making and regularly evaluate climate risks so that investments are directed toward the greatest environmental and public health benefits. As a conservation biologist who has conducted systematic post-Palisades Fire coastal contamination monitoring, I believe the City must also take seriously the

cumulative environmental health risks that disasters create for our coastline and communities.

2. What specific ideas do you envision for the future of the Santa Monica Airport land after its closure, and how can the City more broadly preserve and expand its green spaces?

The airport site represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I support preserving a significant portion of the land as open space, parkland, habitat, recreation, environmental education, and community-serving uses. Decisions about the future of the site should be driven by extensive public engagement and reflect the long-term interests of Santa Monica residents, not predetermined by ballot measure before a comprehensive planning process has occurred.

More broadly, the City should prioritize protecting existing parks and open spaces, expanding tree canopy, improving access to green space in underserved areas, and identifying opportunities to incorporate nature, habitat restoration, and recreational amenities into future planning efforts.

3. Do you support the Club's resolution calling for a citywide ban of artificial turf on locally owned public land?

Yes. Artificial turf presents concerns related to heat, microplastic pollution, stormwater contamination, and potential environmental and public health impacts. As a coastal city committed to sustainability, Santa Monica should prioritize natural and environmentally responsible alternatives whenever feasible. Any decisions regarding recreational facilities should balance environmental protection, public health, maintenance requirements, and community needs.

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

Environmental justice means ensuring that all communities have equal access to a healthy environment and are not disproportionately burdened by pollution or environmental hazards.

In Santa Monica, key environmental justice issues include air quality impacts from transportation corridors, unequal access to parks and green space, exposure to pollution and contamination, climate-related health risks, and ensuring that all residents have access to clean beaches, clean water, and healthy public spaces.

Following the Palisades Fire, I coordinated systematic scientific monitoring across Santa Monica Bay beaches and documented Santa Monica Canyon as the primary contamination pathway for PAH, PCB, dioxin, and heavy metals. That work demonstrates the kind of science-driven environmental justice advocacy I would bring to the Council.

Mobility

1. Which methods of transportation do you personally use to get around Santa Monica, and how do your transportation habits inform your policy positions?

I use a combination of walking, driving, rideshare services, and public transit depending on the destination and purpose of the trip. Using different modes of transportation has reinforced my belief that Santa Monica needs a balanced transportation system that works for residents, workers, visitors, seniors, families, and people with disabilities.

The Palisades Fire gave me a new perspective on transportation and emergency preparedness. During the mandatory evacuation, my family experienced firsthand the fear and uncertainty that comes when thousands of people are trying to leave an area at the same time. I witnessed severe traffic congestion, people abandoning vehicles, and others fleeing on foot. Transportation infrastructure is not only about daily mobility, but also about public safety and emergency response.

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

The success of pedestrian-only streets depends on the location, surrounding businesses, accessibility, traffic impacts, and community support. I am open to exploring additional pedestrian-oriented areas where there is strong evidence that they would improve economic activity, public space activation, and quality of life. Any proposals should involve extensive community engagement, pilot programs where appropriate, and careful evaluation of impacts on residents, businesses, accessibility, and parking.

3. What changes should be made to promote safety for bike riders, pedestrians, and other alternate modes of transportation?

The City should continue investing in safe infrastructure, including well-designed bike facilities, improved crosswalks, traffic calming measures, better lighting, and safer intersections. At the same time, we need stronger enforcement of traffic laws and greater attention to conflicts involving bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, pedestrians, and vehicles. Safety improvements should be data-driven and focused on reducing injuries and fatalities while maintaining accessibility for all users.

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

I support studying future transit improvements that provide clear benefits to residents and reduce congestion. Any future rail expansion should be evaluated based on ridership, cost effectiveness, environmental impacts, community input, and overall public benefit. Given limited public resources, investments should be guided by measurable transportation outcomes.

5. Should shared mobility devices (eg, scooters, e-bikes, self-driving cars) be encouraged or discouraged in Santa Monica?

I support shared mobility options when they are operated safely and responsibly. Scooters, e-bikes, and emerging technologies can provide useful transportation alternatives, but they

must be managed to protect pedestrian safety, maintain accessibility, and prevent clutter or unsafe operation in public spaces.

6. Should the overall amount of street parking in Santa Monica be reduced in order to encourage other modes of transportation?

I do not support reducing street parking as an end in itself. Parking remains important for residents, businesses, workers, visitors, seniors, and people with disabilities. Transportation policy should focus on expanding options and improving mobility rather than forcing people out of their preferred mode of transportation.

Ballot Measures

1. Do you support the California Billionaire Tax Act, which would impose a one-time emergency 5% tax on those worth more than \$1B? Why or why not?

I would need to review the final language and fiscal analysis before taking a definitive position. In general, I believe those who have benefited most from our economy should contribute their fair share, particularly when revenues are directed toward addressing significant public needs. At the same time, tax policy should be carefully evaluated for effectiveness, legal viability, and whether it will achieve its intended goals.

2. Do you support the state ballot measure which would require voters to present government-issued identification when casting ballots? Why or why not?

No. Election integrity is important, but I am concerned that voter identification requirements can create unnecessary barriers to participation for eligible voters. I support policies that both protect election security and maximize access to the ballot.

3. Do you support the proposed state taxpayer initiative which would limit the ability of local governments to raise revenue through certain taxes and fees including real estate transfer taxes? Why or why not?

No. While I believe local governments should be fiscally responsible and accountable to taxpayers, I am generally concerned about statewide measures that unnecessarily restrict local control. Communities face different challenges and should retain the ability to make local decisions regarding revenue, subject to voter approval and appropriate oversight.

4. Do you support the proposed parcel tax to fund SMMUSD? Why or why not?

I strongly support public education and believe Santa Monica Malibu students deserve excellent schools. However, I also believe taxpayers deserve transparency, accountability, and clear explanations of how additional funds will be used. My support would depend on the measure's final language, demonstrated need, fiscal oversight provisions, and whether the funding is tied to measurable educational outcomes.

5. Do you support the proposed ballot measure which would set aside 25% of the airport land for 3000 units of affordable housing, in addition to the remainder which would become a Great Park? Why or why not?

No. I support creating affordable housing and I strongly support the creation of a Great Park on the airport site. However, I do not support predetermining the future of this once-in-a-generation public asset through a ballot measure before a comprehensive planning process and meaningful community engagement have occurred. The airport site belongs to the people of Santa Monica, and decisions about its future should be guided by public input, environmental considerations, infrastructure capacity, fiscal impacts, and long-term community needs.

Additional Questions

1. Do you support Medicare For All single-payer healthcare? If so, do you support AB1900 (Kalra) specifically?

I support the goal of ensuring that every American has access to affordable, high-quality healthcare and that no one is forced to forgo medical care because of cost.

My own experiences navigating the healthcare system have reinforced my belief that patients deserve accessible, affordable, transparent, and accountable healthcare. With respect to specific legislation such as AB 1900, I would want to review the final language, implementation plan, funding mechanisms, and fiscal impacts before taking a formal position.

2. Do you support closure of Santa Monica Airport as scheduled, or are you open to continued aviation use beyond 2028?

I support closure of Santa Monica Airport as scheduled and the transition of the property to community-serving uses consistent with the City's agreements and voter expectations. The airport site presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create significant open space, recreational amenities, environmental benefits, and other uses that serve the broader community.

3. Why should union workers in Santa Monica, especially those in the hospitality industry, trust that you will fight for their jobs?

Santa Monica's workers are essential to the success of our local economy. Hospitality workers, service workers, educators, healthcare workers, public employees, and countless others help make our city function every day.

I support the right of workers to organize, bargain collectively, advocate for safe working conditions, and earn fair wages. At the same time, I believe we must ensure that our policies support a healthy local economy where businesses can succeed, jobs can be retained, and opportunities can grow.

Protecting workers requires thoughtful policies that strengthen both workers and the local economy. My approach is to focus on measurable outcomes, economic sustainability, and practical solutions that create long-term opportunity for working people and their families.

4. 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 community organizations, neighborhood groups, advocacy organizations, labor organizations, and political clubs all play an important role in civic engagement. If elected, I would maintain open lines of communication with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other community organizations, attend meetings when appropriate, seek feedback early in the policy development process, and remain accessible to members and residents.

At the same time, my responsibility as a councilmember would be to listen to a broad range of perspectives and make decisions based on what I believe is in the best interest of Santa Monica. Community buy-in is strongest when residents feel genuinely heard and engaged before decisions are made.

5. What is the most important topic that was left off of this questionnaire?

Government accountability and public trust.

Many of the issues discussed in this questionnaire ultimately come down to whether residents trust that government is listening, making decisions transparently, and delivering results. Regardless of whether the issue is housing, homelessness, public safety, environmental protection, transportation, or economic development, residents deserve clear information, meaningful opportunities to participate, and measurable outcomes. Rebuilding public trust should be one of Santa Monica's highest priorities.

6. Please describe whether and how you used generative AI tools in preparing your responses. If elected, how would you use these tools in governance, if at all?

I used generative AI as an editing and drafting tool to help organize my thoughts, improve clarity, and refine written responses. The ideas, positions, experiences, and policy views reflected in these answers are my own.

If elected, I believe generative AI can be a useful tool for improving efficiency, analyzing information, summarizing documents, enhancing public communication, and increasing access to government information. However, AI should supplement human judgment, not replace it. Any use of AI in government should be transparent, subject to appropriate safeguards, and implemented in a manner that protects privacy, accuracy, accountability, and public trust.

Considering Santa Monica City Councilmembers lack staff and additional resources, the use of AI is likely unavoidable. However, one of my greatest strengths is that I'm a focused

reader of documents, agendas, details and policy. This allows me to not miss important and consequential details that AI often overlooks.