

Santa Monica Democratic Club
2026 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

General Information

Candidate Name: Caroline Torosis

Email Address: ctorosis@gmail.com

Candidate's Current Occupation: Mayor of Santa Monica; Policy Director for Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

Candidate's Employer: County of Los Angeles

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): Eddie Mendoza,
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1. What qualifications do you bring to this office?

I am the Mayor of Santa Monica and have served on the City Council since 2022, when I was elected with the most votes of any candidate in the race. Before that, I served two terms on the Santa Monica Rent Control Board. Professionally, I serve as Policy Director for Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, where I oversee economic and workforce development, human service and child welfare, cultural affairs, infrastructure and environmental justice, and major events. I am a licensed attorney who has worked on consumer protection my entire career.

That combination of expertise across multiple disciplines and within government is what I bring to this office. I know how City Hall actually works. I have a track record of delivering on the issues residents care about most, from expanding our affordable housing pipeline to launching one of the most ambitious local restorative justice programs in the nation. And I have direct relationships across county and state government that I have used to bring real resources home to Santa Monica. I approach this work with rigor, persistence, and a focus on outcomes and impact.

2. Why are you running?

I am running for re-election because the work I started in 2022 is not finished, and this is a pivotal moment for our city. Santa Monica is finally moving in the right direction after years of instability, and we are finally starting to see a comeback as we step onto the world stage with the FIFA World Cup, the Super Bowl, and the LA28 Olympics arriving at our doorstep. That is an extraordinary opportunity, but it also means the pressure on our housing market, our neighborhoods, and our most vulnerable residents will only intensify.

I want to make sure Santa Monica meets that moment by choosing inclusion over displacement and affordability over speculation. The airport closure still needs to be seen through. Our affordable housing pipeline still needs to be built. The Pico Neighborhood still needs the investment it was promised. We have to re-commit to our sustainability goals. We must protect our tenants and show the rest of the state and nation what is possible. I am running to finish that work, and to keep Santa Monica a place where working families, renters, and longtime residents can actually afford to stay.

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 top issues are housing affordability and homelessness, economic recovery, and clean neighborhoods and safe streets. These map directly to the pillars of our Realignment Plan, the Housing for All, Economic Growth, and Safe and Clean priorities that have guided this city's renewal. They are not separate problems. They are connected, and I believe they demand a connected response.

On housing, Santa Monica was once a national leader on renters' rights, rent control, and the preservation and production of affordable housing. We need to get back to that. I will keep expanding our affordable housing pipeline, defend and strengthen tenant protections, and treat homelessness as the affordability crisis it fundamentally is. On economic recovery, I will build on the Realignment Plan, our permit streamlining, and our first-in-Southern-California Entertainment Zone to bring our downtown and commercial corridors back, with a focus on local workers and small businesses, especially as the World Cup and the 2028 Games approach. On clean neighborhoods and safe streets, I will keep investing in the welcoming, well-maintained public spaces and the smart, right-sized public safety approach that residents count on, pairing mental health and homelessness response with the right professionals rather than defaulting to armed response.

What sets me apart is that I have already done this job and delivered. I came into office having served on the Rent Control Board and worked at the county level on economic recovery, so I did not need a learning curve. And my career with the County gives Santa Monica a direct line to county networks and resources that no other candidate can offer.

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

Elected Officials

Janice Hahn, LA County Supervisor, 4th District

Holly J. Mitchell, Supervisor, 2nd District

Jeff Prang, LA County Assessor

Celeste Rodriguez, California State Assemblymember District 43
Ben Allen, California State Senator
Rick Chavez Zbur, California State Assemblymember District 51
Ellis Raskin, Santa Monica City Councilmember
Barry Snell, Santa Monica City Councilmember and SMC Trustee
Dan Hall, Santa Monica City Councilmember
Natalya Zernitskaya, Santa Monica City Councilmember
Jesse Zwick, Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tempore
Freddy Puza, Mayor, Culver City
Bubba Fish, Vice Mayor, Culver City
Alicia Mignano, SMMUSD School Board President
Laurie Lieberman, SMMUSD Board
Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, Board Member, SMMUSD
Dr. Sion Roy, Chair, SMC Board
Tom Peters, Vice Chair, SMC Board
Dr. Nancy Greenstein, Trustee, Santa Monica College
Dr. Luis Barrera Castanon, Trustee, SMC Board
Anastasia Foster, SMC Trustee and former Rent Control Board Chair
Kay Ambriz, Commissioner, Santa Monica Rent Control Board

Community Leaders

Ted Winterer, former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Richard Bloom, former Assemblymember, CA 50th District
Sue Himmelrich, former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Gleam Davis, former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Judy Abdo, former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Denny Zane, Co-Chair, SMRR and former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Rev. Jim Conn, former Mayor, City of Santa Monica
Linda Sullivan, Director of Facilities and Programming, Santa Monica College
Shari Davis, Steering Committee, Committee for Excellent Public Schools
Ralph Mechur, Steering Committee, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights
Shawn Landres, Planning Commissioner, City of Santa Monica
Susan Sheu, LA County Democratic Party Recording Secretary
Derek Devermont, Delegate, Democratic National Committee
Kristen Torres Pawling, Committee Member, Culver City General Plan Advisory Committee
Jarrett Barrios, SVP, American Red Cross and former MA State Representative
Rudy Espinoza, Executive Director, Inclusive Action for the City

Organizations

LA/OC Building and Construction Trades Council
IBEW Local 11
Operating Engineers Local 12
Westside Young Democrats
Democratic Municipal Officials (DMO)
Sierra Club, Los Angeles

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

I have lived in Santa Monica for roughly 15 years. I grew up in the Bay Area of Northern California, near Stanford, then moved to Los Angeles to attend UCLA. During college I also lived for several months in Paris for a study abroad program and in Washington D.C for a summer in law school, working at the Department of Justice. I lived in St. Louis, Missouri, for three years while attending law school at Washington University in St. Louis. After graduating, I lived in neighboring Brentwood for about a year before moving to Santa Monica, which has been home ever since.

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

Yes. I am committed to serving my full four-year term and to continuing this work for Santa Monica.

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

Before my election to the City Council in 2022, I served two terms as an elected Commissioner on the Santa Monica Rent Control Board, which gave me years of direct experience attending and participating in local public meetings and engaging with Council on housing and tenant issues. I regularly attended and spoke at City Council meetings on issues including rent control, the Housing Element, and tenant protections, and I worked closely with Council on policy that intersected with the Rent Control Board's mandate. Civic engagement in Santa Monica has been a constant in my life well before I held this office.

Campaign Finance

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

Provided in publicly disclosed campaign filings.

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

\$100,000

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. Consistent with my values and my record, I decline contributions from the oil, gas, and coal industry and their lobbyists and PACs, as well as commercial developers.

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 I first registered to vote at 18, and I have never been registered with another party or as Decline to State.

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?

I have been politically active since I was 16, when I campaigned for Howard Dean for President. My first job was working field for Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren while I was in high school. Since then I have worked or volunteered on numerous campaigns, including Steve Westly for Governor and Hillary Clinton for President in 2008, where I helped open her California campaign headquarters in Koreatown, served as a field organizer, and then managed her California surrogate speakers bureau. I am passionate about electing progressive Democrats and have volunteered for a range of campaigns since returning to Los Angeles County after law school. I have also been active in regional progressive networks, including Local Progress, and have supported candidates like Michael Tubbs and Brad Lander.

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.

Candidates I have endorsed or publicly supported include Supervisor Holly Mitchell, former Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur, Michael Tubbs, Brad Lander, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and a range of local Santa Monica candidates for Council, School Board, and College Board. On ballot measures, I supported Measure GS, the cannabis business tax, and the cap on rent increases in 2022, among others.

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.

I am an active member of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party and have served on subcommittees including the Labor Subcommittee and the Judicial Endorsement Subcommittee. I have served as an elected Executive Board Delegate to the California Democratic Party and as an appointed member of CADEM committees, including the Platform Committee and the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. I am a member of the Santa Monica Democratic Club, Westside Young Democrats, and the Stonewall Democratic Club. I am active in Local Progress, the national network of progressive local elected officials. I am also an active UCLA alumna.

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

I have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform. As an appointed member of the CDP Platform Committee, I have worked directly on this document with delegates across the state. I broadly agree with the Platform and the values it espouses. I do not have substantive disagreements to note.

City Governance

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

Over the past few years, this Council has stabilized the city and started delivering again. We came through a genuinely difficult period, including the fiscal pressures of the pandemic recovery and the regional impact of the 2025 Palisades Fire, and we responded with a serious, coordinated agenda. The Realignment Plan, the Entertainment Zone, the expansion of our affordable housing pipeline, and the launch of our restorative justice program all reflect a Council that is functioning and focused on results. We do not always agree, and we should not. But the tone has been more

professional and more productive, and we have been able to take on hard, long-deferred issues and actually move them forward.

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.

Yes. I would prioritize exploring ranked choice voting for Santa Monica's elections. In our current at-large system, voters often face a long list of candidates and can only meaningfully support a few, which can split the vote, reward narrow pluralities, and leave significant parts of the community feeling unrepresented. Ranked choice voting lets residents rank candidates in order of preference, ensures winners have broader support, reduces the spoiler dynamic and negative campaigning, and in a multi-seat body like ours can produce a Council that more accurately reflects the full range of our community. Given Santa Monica's long-running concerns about whether every neighborhood, especially the Pico Neighborhood, has a real voice in how this city is governed, I think ranked choice voting deserves serious study as a tool for fairer, more representative outcomes.

I would also support exploring a directly elected mayor who chairs the Council, paired with a strong and capable City Manager, so that residents have a clear, accountable civic leader they choose directly. And I believe our part-time Councilmembers need adequate staff support so that items coming before us are properly studied and analyzed. The current structure, with a low salary and no dedicated support, narrows the pool of people who can realistically run for and serve in this office, which works against representation. Finally, I would keep investing in transparency tools that make it easier for residents to track legislation, budget decisions, and whether we are actually delivering on what we adopt.

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 do not stop at the city line, so Santa Monica has to lead regionally, not just locally. The good news is we have shown it works. Our homelessness progress came directly from collaboration: a joint City-County Therapeutic Transport Team that pairs outreach with mental health crisis support, a SaMo Bridge diversion program built with state grant funding, and coordination with safe parking programs in Culver City and across the Westside for our growing

vehicle-dwelling population. That regional approach is a big part of why our service area has seen homelessness fall while we move more people indoors.

We should do more of this, and do it more assertively. Specifically, I would: pursue County and state dollars far more aggressively so the cost of outreach, mental health and substance use services, and supportive housing does not fall on Santa Monica taxpayers alone; formalize shared regional capacity with our Westside neighbors, like interim housing and safe parking, so no single city is trying to solve a regional problem within its own borders; and deepen our partnership with Metro and neighboring cities on transportation, especially as the World Cup and the 2028 Games approach and put enormous pressure on transit, open streets, and our housing market.

My day job as Policy Director for Supervisor Mitchell gives me a direct line into County decision-making, and I have leveraged that network to put Santa Monica in the best possible position. But the strategy does not depend on any one office. It depends on Santa Monica showing up as a serious, well-organized regional partner with a real plan, which we now have.

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?

We have made progress, but we can do better. Major policy decisions move quickly, and residents do not always have an accessible way to weigh in before a decision is made. I would strengthen early and plain-language communication about what is coming before Council, expand outreach in multiple languages, especially in the Pico Neighborhood, and make sure our legislative advocacy positions are published and explained clearly. Accountability also means following through after the vote. I am focused on implementation and on reporting back to residents on whether our programs are actually delivering the outcomes we promised.

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.

Right to counsel is my clearest example, because of how we chose to implement it. The easy path would have been to adopt a right to counsel program, announce that tenants facing eviction would have a lawyer, and call it a win. I pushed for something harder and

more honest: we said we did not want to move forward with right to counsel unless we also had real resources for problem-solving before people ever reached eviction.

That insistence is what produced our renter aid program to pair with legal representation for all qualifying tenants, roughly \$6 million in Measure GS funds, delivered in partnership with The People Concern, aimed at keeping rent-burdened residents stably housed upstream of an eviction filing. Representation in eviction court matters, but if that is the only tool, you are intervening at the very last and most precarious moment. By pairing legal counsel with early financial assistance and problem-solving, we built a system that tries to keep people housed in the first place, not just defend them once they are already in crisis.

To me that is what implementation really means: not just adopting a policy, but asking whether it will actually work for the people it is meant to serve, and refusing to launch the visible piece without the resources that make it effective. Additionally, it's working with staff to give clear policy guidance and foster buy-in. So I focused on clear eligibility, a real delivery partner who can get dollars to households quickly, and accountability for outcomes. Adoption is the easy part. Delivery, and designing the policy so it actually prevents harm, is the job.

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 are on the front line right now. When the federal government threatens civil liberties, cities like Santa Monica have to be a firewall for our residents. That means protecting the rights of immigrants, renters, women, LGBTQ plus residents, and communities of color through local policy, clear public information about people's rights, and a refusal to use local resources to advance federal overreach. It also means defending the integrity of our own democratic processes, protecting access to the ballot, and being transparent and accountable in how we govern. Santa Monica should lead by example and show that local democracy can still deliver for people.

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?

This is central to my work, and it is why I fought so hard for our restorative justice program. Santa Monica caused real, documented harm to its Black residents through redlining, urban renewal, and the freeway and civic center projects that displaced roughly 2,500 households from the Pico Neighborhood and the Belmar Triangle.

Our \$5.5 million restorative justice investment is one of the largest locally funded efforts of its kind in the nation, and it has to translate into tangible repair: financial compensation where appropriate, affordable housing, workforce development, and structural investment in the community. I also fought to ensure the people doing this work on the Restorative Justice Commission are not asked to do it for free. Beyond the program itself, we have to make sure Black residents can afford to stay in Santa Monica, which ties directly back to housing affordability and anti-displacement policy. We have to continue implementing the Black Apology.

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

Santa Monica has backed up its values with action, and I am committed to doing more. Our Police Department does not participate in federal immigration enforcement, does not ask residents about their immigration status, and does not detain anyone on ICE's behalf without a judicial warrant. Our police chief reaffirmed that publicly, and it matters that residents hear it directly: if you are the victim of or a witness to a crime, you can call SMPD without fear. The City has also formally affirmed by Council resolution that we will not use local resources to carry out federal immigration enforcement, and during the first Trump administration we joined legal challenges to unlawful federal actions.

As enforcement has escalated, we have gone further. The City stood up a rapid response capacity so that when enforcement activity occurs in our community, residents have a way to get verified information and connect quickly to legal help, and we are providing flexible cash assistance directly to families impacted by detention and enforcement, because when a breadwinner is taken, a family can lose its housing and stability almost overnight. These are the kinds of concrete, local interventions that meet the moment.

There is more we can build on. I support sustained funding for know-your-rights education and rapid-response information in Spanish and the other languages spoken here, deeper partnerships with trusted legal services and community organizations who can reach families that government cannot, and an absolute guarantee that access to city services, schools, and emergency help never depends on documentation status. I have also supported exploring a dedicated structure, such as an Office of Immigrant

Affairs, so this work is coordinated and accountable rather than ad hoc. In this climate, fear itself is a weapon, and one of the most powerful things a city can do is replace fear with clear information, trusted relationships, and an unambiguous commitment that Santa Monica belongs to everyone who lives here.

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 absorbed decades of deliberate disinvestment and the environmental burden of the 10 freeway, the waste transfer station, and other land uses concentrated there. The Council's role is to move from acknowledging harm to actively reversing it, and to do that in partnership with the Pico Neighborhood rather than on its behalf. That means real action on the three fronts this question names: displacement, economic opportunity, and community investment.

On displacement, the Council has to prioritize keeping Pico residents in their homes, because the families with the deepest roots and the strongest claim to this neighborhood are also the most vulnerable to being priced out. That means directing our anti-displacement tools, renter protections, renter aid, and affordable housing investment, into the neighborhood with intention, not leaving it to chance.

On economic opportunity and community investment, my focus is the Pico Corridors of Opportunity initiative, which is about building lasting economic power in the neighborhood through wealth building and shared ownership, not just one-time spending. To get this right, I applied for and was accepted into the Harvard Graduate School of Design's Just City Mayoral Fellowship, because I want our approach to repairing harm along the Pico corridor to be rigorous and grounded in national best practice. Through my participation, Harvard is bringing a fellow to the City to help lead a comprehensive community engagement process for this initiative. The purpose is to ensure that the solutions we advance are centered on the voices of the people who were harmed, rather than simply what government thinks should happen. Restorative justice done right is done with a community, not to it or for it.

So the Council's role, as I see it, is threefold: protect Pico residents from displacement, build real and lasting economic opportunity through ownership and wealth building, and make sure the community itself drives the decisions about what investment looks like. The Pico Neighborhood deserves visible, durable investment and a genuine seat at the table, and I intend to keep delivering both.

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 be an unequivocal sanctuary for LGBTQ+ residents and visitors. As a member of the Stonewall Democratic Club, I was proud to earn their endorsement last election and again this election cycle. At a moment when LGBTQ+ rights are under coordinated political and legal attack nationally, the City should protect access to gender-affirming care, ensure nondiscrimination in city services and contracting, support LGBTQ+ community organizations, and continue celebrating and protecting events like Pride on the Promenade. We should make clear, in policy and in practice, that every LGBTQ+ resident belongs here and is safe here.

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 have already taken concrete action on this as a Councilmember. I worked to reform our civil service process and to change some of the minimum requirements for city positions, because outdated or unnecessarily rigid qualifications screen out talented candidates and narrow our applicant pool in ways that work against diversity. Reexamining what a job actually requires, versus what we have simply always asked for, is one of the most practical levers a city has to recruit a more diverse and representative workforce, and I pushed for exactly that.

I want to build on that work with the City Manager. That means continuing to recruit from diverse pipelines, examining promotion and pay equity across departments so that advancement and not just hiring reflects our values, and investing in training that helps staff and managers build a genuinely inclusive workplace, not just an inclusive service model. As an executive manager within the County of Los Angeles, I have experience identifying and addressing inequities in large public organizations, and I bring that experience directly to this work. We are currently underway in revising the County's civil service rules and our dispute resolution and discipline process for members of protected classes, which is work that I've led on in my professional capacity.

A workforce that reflects the community it serves makes Santa Monica better at its job. It builds trust, improves service, and ensures the people making decisions understand the full range of residents those decisions affect.

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?

A sustainable local economy is one where the people who make this city run, the workers, the small business owners, the families, can actually afford to live in it. This is work I know deeply. I have spent over a decade leading economic development initiatives at the County of Los Angeles, including our region's recovery from the pandemic. I understand what it takes to cut red tape and get projects done, and I have brought that approach to Santa Monica.

You can see it in the Realignment Plan's economic strategy, which I have helped lead. We waived and reduced fees for restaurants and outdoor dining, cut film permit fees to bring jobs back, modernized parking and permitting so it is faster and cheaper to operate, and created a dedicated economic development fund. The goal is to make Santa Monica a place where people want to do business because it makes sense for them, especially small businesses and women-owned and BIPOC-owned businesses that anchor our neighborhoods.

But making it easier to do business here is only half the equation. If people cannot afford to live here, there will be no true renaissance for this city. That is why I led the **Affordability Agenda** with Councilmembers Hall and Raskin, a set of programs designed to bring down the cost of living for Santa Monica residents while simultaneously stimulating business activity. The two goals reinforce each other: a city where workers can afford to stay is a city where businesses can find employees and customers, and where the recovery actually reaches the people who live here.

On jobs specifically, I helped build high-road workforce programs at the county that prioritize equity, climate, and job quality, and I am bringing that model here, so the wave of activity from the World Cup and the 2028 Games benefits local workers through strong labor standards and community workforce agreements, not just outside contractors. When workers and small businesses can afford to be here, and when it is genuinely easy to do business here, the whole city is stronger.

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?

The Realignment Plan is the foundation, and I have helped lead it. We made a \$60 million bet on ourselves to reactivate downtown, including a first-ever \$3 million

business attraction fund, fee reductions for restaurants and outdoor dining, modernized parking, and waived film permit fees to bring production back.

At its core, this is about building a culture of yes in Santa Monica. For too long, doing business here meant fighting through delay, cost, and uncertainty. A major piece of changing that is finally getting a certified Local Coastal Program, which I have led on. Much of our downtown, including the Promenade, sits in the coastal zone, where projects need permits from both the City and the California Coastal Commission, often taking many months. I helped drive us to a first-ever MOU with the Commission to complete our LCP. Once certified, coastal-zone applicants go through a single local process instead of two, which means less delay, more local control, and a far easier path for businesses and major activations along our coast.

Going forward, I want to build on that. Traditional big-box retail is not coming back to the Promenade, where ground-floor occupancy sits around 76 percent, so I support reshaping downtown toward restaurants, arts, live music, and experiential uses. I want to use the tools we just funded to attack vacancies directly: tenant improvement grants up to \$50,000, expedited permitting for long-vacant storefronts, and restaurant conversion incentives. And I want to keep activating our streets through the Entertainment Zone, now expanded across downtown, the Pier, Main Street, and Montana Avenue, and through major programming like the World Cup fan zone and our Goldenvoice music festival, with more to come in the lead up to 2028 that I am really excited about. As we fill storefronts, I will keep fighting for a real place for independent and local businesses, so we solve the vacancy problem without losing what makes downtown Santa Monica distinct.

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?

The Entertainment Zone has been a success and a genuinely creative tool. We were the first city in Southern California to launch one, on the Third Street Promenade in June 2025, and the early results show it has helped expand events, support local businesses, and draw people back downtown, with no material increase in crime. Its real strength is driving event-based activity. Based on that, I supported expanding the framework to the broader downtown core, with event-based authority extended to the Pier, Main Street, and Montana Avenue, managed by the local business improvement districts. I support thoughtful expansion tied to events and to neighborhood buy-in, while staying attentive to operational costs, staffing, and the concerns of partners like

Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. I am cautious about over-extending geographic boundaries without that groundwork in place.

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?

Our housing crisis is, first and foremost, an affordability crisis, and at its root it is an economic justice issue. For decades, wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. Rents have far outpaced incomes, and working families are now spending more than half of what they earn just to keep a roof over their heads. When the cost of simply staying housed climbs faster than the paychecks of the teachers, service workers, caregivers, and young families who make this city run, the result is not just financial strain. It is displacement, and it falls hardest on the people who can least afford it and who have the deepest roots here.

The primary causes are a deep regional shortage of housing at every income level, decades of underproduction of deed-restricted affordable housing, and speculative pressure that treats housing as an investment vehicle rather than a place for people to live. Layered on top of that is a fundamental mismatch between what people earn and what it costs to live here, which no single housing policy alone can fix. In Santa Monica specifically, the pressure will only grow as the World Cup and the 2028 Games make us an even more desirable destination. If we do not act intentionally, that pressure accelerates displacement, widens the gap between those who own and those who rent, and deepens the inequality that already defines too much of our region.

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 was once a national leader on renters' rights, rent control, and the preservation and production of affordable housing, and that legacy is real. Where we have fallen short is in the pace of affordable housing production and in fully coordinating our homelessness response. We have over 900 unhoused neighbors in our community annually, many of whom once had stable housing here and lost it.

Production matters, and I am proud we have worked to expand our pipeline, but we have to actually build those units, and we cannot treat new construction as the only answer. The most innovative cities are recognizing that the fastest, most equitable way

to expand affordability is often to preserve and protect the housing we already have, and to shift it out of the speculative market entirely. That is where I want Santa Monica to lead again.

My priorities reflect that fuller approach. First, preservation and community ownership: I want to explore tools like a Community Opportunity to Purchase framework, which gives nonprofits and tenants a first chance to buy buildings when they come up for sale, paired with an acquisition fund and community land trust partners so those homes become permanently affordable and community-controlled rather than flipped by speculators. Cities like San Francisco and Washington, D.C. have used these tools to take thousands of units off the speculative market for good. Second, direct stabilization: we have already done nationally notable work here, from our Preserving Our Diversity cash assistance for low-income seniors to Right to Counsel and our new renter aid program, and I want to expand that direct help to keep people housed before they ever reach crisis. Third, public land and social housing: I am committed to using publicly owned land for deed-restricted affordable housing, and I want us to look seriously at the social housing and public-developer models, like Montgomery County's revolving production fund, that let a city build and own mixed-income housing rather than depending entirely on the private market. And fourth, on homelessness, holding our county and regional partners accountable for delivering the outreach, mental health services, and supportive housing that our local prevention work depends on.

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?

The approaches I view as most relevant are the ones that protect tenants and rent-controlled housing first, and that prioritize producing genuinely affordable, deed-restricted, and community-owned housing. I want to continue to prioritize the production of housing that's truly affordable for Santa Monicans.

So the policies I prioritize are: robust state funding for Low Income Housing Tax Credits and other subsidies that actually build deed-restricted affordable units, especially in high-opportunity areas like Santa Monica; dedicated preservation financing so we can acquire and protect existing affordable and rent-controlled housing before it is lost to speculation; and support for social housing and community ownership models like community land trusts and tenant opportunity to purchase.

I will support state approaches that build on Santa Monica's tradition of strong tenant protection and while also streamlining the production of deed restricted affordable housing, and leveraging public land for affordable housing development.

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 in housing near transit, jobs, and services, paired with open space and the tenant protections that make growth work for renters rather than against them. I do want to acknowledge Santa Monica is not an exclusionary city that has refused to build. We are a majority-renter city with rent control, inclusionary requirements, and one of the strongest tenant-protection records in California. Our council adopted an Affordable Housing Production Program to provide opportunities to get units already entitled build more quickly.

The state's preemption push has been aimed at cities that have spent decades blocking any housing at all, and I do not believe one-size-fits-all state mandates should be applied in ways that override rent control, or our ability to decide where and for whom our city builds housing. We should be a willing and proactive partner in building affordable housing, while firmly defending our authority to maintain and strengthen the tenant protections that the state should be holding up as a model, not preempting.

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?

I did not support SB 79 as introduced, because it did not adequately protect our rent-controlled housing or the tenants who live in it. Rather than just oppose it, we engaged our state lobbyists and pushed for amendments to protect tenants and prevent displacement, and I supported the bill only after those protections were added. The anti-displacement provisions do not go far enough on their own. State minimums are a floor, not a ceiling, so yes, Santa Monica should go further. Our staff is already developing a transit-oriented development alternative plan to implement SB 79 in a way

that protects our rent-controlled apartments as surgically as possible, accommodating new housing near transit while shielding existing tenants from displacement.

6. 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 fundamental to the fabric of this community. In a city that is roughly 70 percent renters, it is the difference between residents being able to build stable lives here and being at the mercy of the market. It affords renters the same stability and dignity we extend to homeowners, and it recognizes that a person's home does not have to be a property they own. As a former Rent Control Board Commissioner, I worked with both tenants and landlords to enact common-sense reforms, keep Santa Monicans in their homes, and maintain transparency and fiscal health at the Board. Rent control is a community stabilization tool, and protecting it is non-negotiable for me.

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 are central to our housing strategy, not an add-on, and they have been at the center of my work. Keeping people in the homes they already have is the most immediate and cost-effective anti-displacement tool we have. It is far cheaper to keep someone housed than to rehouse them once they have lost everything.

This is a record I have led on. I championed our right to counsel program, and I insisted we pair it with resources to help people before they ever reach eviction, because a lawyer in eviction court is the last line of defense, not the first. That produced our Santa Monica Renter Aid program, roughly \$6 million in Measure GS funds delivered with The People Concern to keep rent-burdened households housed. I also led on expanding Preserving Our Diversity, which gives direct cash assistance to our lowest-income seniors so they can age in place. For a city our size, these are nationally notable protections. Yes, I favor expanding right to counsel and building out this full continuum of prevention, assistance, and representation.

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?

Measure GS has begun generating meaningful revenue for affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and schools, which is exactly what voters intended. I do not

support amendments. I want to be guided by the data and by the resident oversight committee on how effectively those funds are reaching their intended purposes. If implementation experience shows we can improve how funds are allocated or how quickly they are deployed to keep people housed, I am open to those refinements.

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?

Yes. I am committed to using publicly owned land to generate deed-restricted affordable housing, and I believe prioritizing city land for affordability is one of the most powerful tools we have. Beyond that, I support a Housing Acquisition Fund model, where the City acquires and prepares land and then turns it over to nonprofit affordable developers with deed restrictions to speed up production. I support preservation financing so we can acquire and rehabilitate existing units rather than lose them, stronger affordability requirements in mixed-use projects, and aggressively pursuing Low Income Housing Tax Credits and state and county funding. I also support social housing and other creative shared ownership models.

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?

Yes. Programs that provide direct assistance to rent-burdened households, including our long-standing Preserve Our Diversity work and the city's renter aid efforts, are among the most effective anti-displacement tools we have. I support expanding assistance to additional severely rent-burdened households, with priority for seniors and long-term tenants on fixed incomes and for residents at risk of displacement, including descendants of those displaced from the Pico Neighborhood and Belmar Triangle. I would finance expansion through a combination of Measure GS resources as appropriate, other housing trust fund dollars, and county and regional partnerships.

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?

Public safety and quality of life are foundational, and residents have rightly expected us to take them seriously. The Realignment Plan was built on the recognition that without addressing safety, our economic recovery would struggle. The City needs to feel loved and cared for again. I see progress in our more coordinated approach and in the data showing stability or improvement in many crime categories, including in the Entertainment Zone. What concerns me most is making sure we are using the right tool for the job: pairing mental health and homelessness response with the appropriate professionals rather than defaulting to armed police response for situations that call for social workers and crisis teams. Quality of life also means clean, safe, welcoming public spaces, which is part of why the downtown recovery work matters. I am proud that since implementing the Realignment Plan, Part 1 crime is down 12.5% in our downtown. We are also entering into an MOU between our police department and Metro to enforce the law on the Metro platforms in Santa Monica. Our police department is fully staffed for the first time in 20 years. We will continue to stay the course to ensure that Santa Monica truly feels safe.

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?

Public safety has to be both effective and right-sized, and the next two years should focus on getting the right responder to the right call. First, I would expand unarmed and behavioral health response so trained professionals, not armed officers, handle non-emergency mental health and homelessness calls, while police focus on genuine emergencies and serious crime. We have already started to do this with the TTT partnering with County mental health workers, and APU in our fire department. The model is proven: Denver's STAR program reassigned tens of thousands of nonviolent calls to clinician-and-EMT teams and has effectively never needed police backup on a safety basis, at a fraction of the per-call cost of armed response. We are working to build something comparable. Second, I would invest in prevention, the most cost-effective public safety tool we have: youth programs, economic opportunity, and community investment that addresses root causes before they become 911 calls.

On allocation, if additional funding is required, I will support that on a case by case basis. On metrics, we should hold ourselves to more than crime rates, publicly tracking response times, the share of behavioral health calls resolved without police, repeat contacts, use-of-force incidents, and resident perceptions of safety, so the community can hold us accountable and we can adjust as we learn.

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?

As a coastal city, we are on the front line of climate change, and the 2025 Palisades Fire was a stark reminder of how close these threats are. Over the next four years, I would prioritize resilience: expanding urban greening and tree canopy, especially in heat-burdened neighborhoods like Pico, establishing cooling and clean-air infrastructure for extreme heat and wildfire smoke events, and continuing to plan seriously for sea level rise along our coast, as we have with our Santa Monica Dunes Restoration Project to promote coastal resilience. I also want to keep building a high-road green economy, drawing on the climate-focused workforce programs I helped create at the county, so that our climate response also creates good local jobs.

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?

I am fully committed to closing the airport on schedule and delivering the Great Park that Santa Monica voters were promised. We are one of the most park-poor cities in the region, and this is a once-in-a-generation chance to change that. I envision a true Great Park: large, connected open space with room for recreation and athletic fields, native and drought-tolerant landscaping, ecological and habitat restoration, walking and biking paths, community gathering and event space, cultural opportunities and opportunities for indigenous land stewardship and cultural uses. It should be a regional destination and an everyday neighborhood resource at the same time, accessible and welcoming to every part of Santa Monica.

However, the airport park cannot be the only place we invest in green space. We should expand and improve parks, pocket parks, urban tree canopy, and green infrastructure across the city, prioritizing the neighborhoods with the least access today, like the Pico Neighborhood. That means more shade and cooling in heat-burdened areas, greening our streets and public rights-of-way, and making sure every resident lives within an easy walk of quality open space..

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

Yes, and I have publicly voted as such. I support moving away from artificial turf on public land in favor of natural, climate-appropriate landscaping, which is better for stormwater, heat, and our environment.

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

The most significant environmental justice issues in Santa Monica are concentrated in the Pico Neighborhood, and they are not an accident of geography. They are the legacy of the same decisions that displaced this community. The 10 freeway tore through the neighborhood and left the residents who remained to absorb its pollution, noise, and heat, and that same community also carries the burden of the city's waste operations and has far less tree canopy and green space than wealthier areas. That is why I have been supportive of our Reconnecting Communities grant and work to cap the 10 freeway.

I see these as restorative justice issues as much as environmental ones, and my approach treats them as connected. That means prioritizing the Pico Neighborhood for urban greening, tree canopy, and shade as we expand green space citywide, pursuing real air-quality and traffic mitigation along the freeway corridor, expanding safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and centering these neighborhoods in our extreme-heat and air-quality planning. I would embed these priorities directly in our restorative justice work, so the residents forced to live with the costs of past decisions are first in line for the investments that improve health and quality of life.

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 get around Santa Monica by a mix of walking, driving, biking and transit depending on the trip. Experiencing the city the way residents do, including where it is easy to walk or bike and where it is not, informs my belief that we need safer, more connected infrastructure for people who are not in a car, paired with realistic options for those who still need to drive.

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

Yes, where it is logistically feasible, pedestrian-only and pedestrian-priority streets can be a real asset. Main Street is a strong example, where we have successfully closed the street to cars for major events thanks to its layout and accessible side-street parking. I would support exploring a more permanent car-free or car-light Main Street, and I am open to similar approaches downtown where the infrastructure supports it and the local businesses are partners in it.

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

We need a connected network of protected bike lanes rather than disjointed segments, safer crossings and intersection design for pedestrians, and traffic-calming measures, especially in neighborhoods like Pico where speed and safety are real concerns. I have already pushed hard on this. I co-sponsored the effort to strengthen our Vision Zero plan with safety-enhancing signal improvements at dangerous intersections, and when staff brought back a Santa Monica Boulevard safety plan that prioritized vehicle throughput over people, I joined in sending it back and said plainly that safety has to take precedence. I have also worked with our state legislators to press Caltrans to close dangerous gaps in our bike network, like the Ohio Avenue corridor.

Going forward, I support encouraging e-bikes paired with the protected infrastructure that makes them safe, and continuing to redesign our most dangerous corridors and intersections for people, not just cars. Safety for people walking and biking should be a baseline design principle, not an afterthought, and reaching our Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic deaths and severe injuries has to remain the standard we hold ourselves to.

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

Yes. I would like to see transit connectivity to Santa Monica strengthened, including extending rail service further west toward the ocean and improving north-south connectivity across the region. Better regional rail is essential both for everyday riders and for managing the transportation demands of the World Cup and the 2028 Games.

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

I would balance their benefits against real safety concerns. E-bikes and bikes, paired with protected lanes, are a genuine mobility gain and I would encourage them with the

right infrastructure. Scooters have proven less effective as a last-mile solution and raise more safety concerns, so they need careful regulation. On emerging technologies like autonomous vehicles, we should proceed thoughtfully, prioritizing safety, equity, and our own local data before broad adoption.

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

I do not think simply eliminating street parking solves our mobility challenges, particularly without convenient structured parking near transit to absorb the loss. I would take this corridor by corridor rather than as a blanket policy in either direction. There are places where reallocating some street parking for protected bike lanes, bus priority, or outdoor dining makes real sense, and I am open to that where the tradeoffs work and the community is at the table. The clearer win, though, is reforming our outdated parking minimums for new development in transit-rich areas, which today drive up costs and stand in the way of small-scale and affordable housing. I would let transit access, neighborhood context, and actual demand guide these decisions, balancing our climate and mobility goals with the needs of residents and small businesses who rely on parking day to day.

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 am supportive of asking those with the greatest wealth to contribute more, particularly when working families are being squeezed and public services are under strain.

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. Voter ID requirements disproportionately burden low-income voters, voters of color, elderly voters, and others who are less likely to hold current government-issued ID. At a time when voting rights are under attack nationally, we should be expanding access to the ballot, not erecting new barriers to it.

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. This kind of initiative is a direct threat to local democracy and to the revenue Santa Monica voters themselves chose to raise that funds essential city services. Measure GS, our voter-approved real estate transfer tax on high-value property sales, funds affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and schools. The initiative would also threaten all parcel taxes. Stripping local governments of the ability to raise revenue our own voters approved would gut programs our residents depend on and undermine local control.

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

Yes. Strong public schools are essential to a thriving Santa Monica, and stable local funding helps protect them from any city budget volatility. I support a parcel tax to sustain funding for our schools and essential city services. Santa Monica is an amazing city in large part due to our excellent public schools, and I want to ensure we maintain funding for our school district while maintaining the City's commitment to provide \$12 million to the school district annually.

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?

I oppose the measure as drafted. My concern is with this specific measure. It is too prescriptive, and it presupposes the outcome of an EIR process that has not yet happened. The Airport Conversion Project is underway, and locking in a fixed land-use mandate through the ballot, before that community-driven process has run its course, is the wrong way to make a decision of this magnitude. I would rather see us close the airport, complete the planning process the community deserves, and make decisions based on that work.

Additional Questions

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

Yes, I support single-payer healthcare. Healthcare is a human right, not a privilege tied to your job, your income, or your immigration status, and our current system fails too many working families through premiums, deductibles, surprise bills, and medical debt. As a city, the cost of healthcare is also inseparable from the affordability crisis I work on every day: when families are one medical emergency away from losing their housing, that is a housing issue too.

On AB 1900, the CalCare bill from Assemblymember Kalra and the California Nurses Association, yes, I support its goal and the framework it lays out for a single-payer system that covers every Californian regardless of immigration status. I know the bill stalled this spring without even reaching a committee hearing, and we need to find a way to finance this program. We should not back away. It is a reason to keep electing and supporting leaders who will keep fighting for it, including being honest about the hard part the Legislature keeps avoiding, which is a real, sustainable financing plan. I would continue to support CalCare and its successors, and to use the platform I have to advocate for a state that treats healthcare as guaranteed.

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

I support closing Santa Monica Airport as scheduled at the end of 2028. I am not open to continued aviation use beyond that. The community fought for decades to win the right to close the airport and convert it to parkland, and I am committed to honoring that and delivering a Great Park for Santa Monica.

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

Union workers should trust me because I have a record of standing with them, not just rhetoric. I have stood with our hospitality workers in the fight for fair contracts, and I believe that Santa Monica's regional position and attraction for tourism is because of our world-class hotels and hospitality options. I am proud to already be endorsed by the Building Trades, IBEW and the Operating Engineers for this campaign. I have worked throughout my career to protect front-line workers and raise labor standards, while making sure we are building our infrastructure with skilled and trained labor. As we prepare for the World Cup and the 2028 Games, hospitality workers are exactly the people who should benefit from the economic activity coming our way, and I will fight to make sure major events and developments come with strong labor standards and good union jobs. I have built high-road workforce programs in my day job that center worker voice, job quality and equity through working with our labor partners across various unions, and I will continue to bring that experience to policymaking in Santa Monica.

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 would continue to be an active, engaged member of the Santa Monica Democratic Club, and I would maintain the open-door approach I have always had: I will talk with anyone who feels they need to be heard on an issue, regardless of their position. The Club plays a vital role as both a convener and a trusted source of information in our city, and I value it as a real partner in building community buy-in. Good proposals are stronger when they are shaped by the community before they reach the dais, and I will keep bringing major proposals to the Club and to residents early and often.

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

The biggest topic that deserves more attention is how Santa Monica navigates the next two years of global events, the FIFA World Cup, the Super Bowl, and the LA28 Olympics, without losing the community that makes this city worth living in. These events bring real opportunity, but they also bring intense pressure on housing, displacement, labor, and public space. The through line of my campaign is making sure we capture the opportunity while protecting renters, workers, and our most vulnerable residents. How we handle this moment will define Santa Monica for a generation.

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?

Yes, I used generative AI as a research aid to prepare these responses, and every answer reflects my own positions and record. I believe in being transparent about that. I have worked on responsible AI policy at the City, including a motion on the responsible use of AI in city government, because I think these tools can improve efficiency and service delivery if they are used carefully, with strong guardrails around transparency, privacy, equity, and accountability. In governance, I would support using AI to help staff work more efficiently and to improve resident services, paired with clear policies that protect residents' data and ensure human judgment and public accountability remain central to decision-making.