

Santa Cruz YIMBY Questionnaire

YIMBYs are excited to see your answers and work with you to build a more equitable and affordable community. YIMBY Action chapters across the country are fighting for an integrated and environmentally sustainable society where every person has access to a safe, affordable home near jobs, services, and opportunity.

YIMBY Action (yimbyaction.org) is active in multiple regions across the country and advocates for better housing policy at the local, state, and national levels. If YIMBY Action endorses in your area, you may see that endorsement referred to as both the YIMBY Action endorsement and the endorsement of an affiliated chapter (i.e. "Santa Cruz YIMBY").

Your answers will be made available to our membership during the endorsement process and may be posted on our website. We often use quotes from these questionnaires when promoting our endorsement.

We understand that candidates may be thinking about housing and land use for the first time, and we are happy to share with you our opinions and educational resources! If you have questions about anything here, please feel free to reach out to hello@yimbyaction.org or speak with a local member.

Additionally, we have collected introductory short videos, podcasts and articles that may help inform you about YIMBY perspectives on housing: <https://yimbyaction.org/2021/top-resources/>

Email *

thekristenbrown@gmail.com

Your Name

As it will appear on the ballot

Kristen Brown

District you are running in

State, District, Any other relevant information

Santa Cruz County Supervisor, District 2

Campaign Email

Best email to stay in touch about candidate forums, etc

votekristenbrown@gmail.com

YOUR COMMUNITY: Is your district suffering from a housing shortage?

Yes

YOUR COMMUNITY: Are there policies that make it harder to build housing in your community that you would like to change?

Yes - stringent zoning laws and overly restrictive building regulations can restrict the type and density of housing that can be built in a particular area and often limit the availability of affordable housing options and drive up housing costs.

YOUR RECORD: Are there pro-housing policies or specific housing developments you have supported in the past that you would like to highlight?

In the past year, I have successfully passed mobile home rent stabilization in the City of Capitola, preventing the displacement of over 60 limited-income residents, supported a 100% affordable housing development within the City, and worked with YIMBY representatives to ensure that our housing element language encouraged transit-oriented development and objective design standards.

YOUR PLATFORM: Do you have a section on your website about housing?

Please Link. If not, tell us a bit about your perspective on housing in your state, region, and/or city.

My general goals and accomplishments related to housing can be found under the two "housing" headers at: <https://votekristenbrown.com/issues-and-accomplishments/>

YOUR YIMBY-NESS: Do you have a pro-housing quote or statement you think YIMBYs would love to hear?

Something for our promotions if we endorse you!

Promoting housing affordability and accessibility isn't just a policy goal - it's a commitment to fostering vibrant, inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Embracing housing as a fundamental human right and allowing responsible development helps us build not just houses, but bridges to a more equitable and prosperous future where both current residents and future generations can build a life in this beautiful place we are fortunate to call home.

ENDING EXCLUSIONARY ZONING

American neighborhoods are defined by exclusion. Systems of [exclusionary zoning](#) ban [duplexes, apartments, subsidized affordable housing, student housing and more](#) in most "residential" areas. Excluding these types of homes keeps neighborhoods homogeneous and makes housing more expensive. Keeping the supply of housing low drives up housing costs, excluding people who are nonetheless an integral part of our community. "YIMBYs advocate for the end of this ban on apartments and other kinds of housing; we want to [end exclusionary zoning](#) (aka "upzone").

Upzoning is especially important in wealthy, high-opportunity neighborhoods where current zoning laws reinforce racial and class segregation.

YIMBY Action advocates for ending exclusionary zoning and legalizing apartments. Communities that ban apartment buildings in residential neighborhoods are exacerbating inequality, increasing sprawl and greenhouse gas emissions, and stunting their own local economy.

Would you fight to end single family home only zoning, ending bans on apartments and other types of housing in all residential areas? [Short Answer]

Yes

What kinds of housing would you like to see in exclusionary communities?

(Accessory Dwelling Units, Duplexes, Missing Middle Apartment Buildings, Subsidized Affordable Housing, etc)

Accessory Dwelling Units, Duplexes, Dense apartment complexes that are appropriately scaled to the size of the surrounding community

STREAMLINING PERMITS

Even where housing is technically allowed, complicated and arbitrary permitting can slow, shrink, or stop housing proposals. Complicated and arbitrary permitting creates opportunities for corruption to flourish, makes building housing take much longer and further drives up the cost of new housing. The process of endless hearings and appeals is [where we often see NIMBYs dominate](#).

Instead of following clear rules about what is allowed and what is prohibited, communities put individual housing proposals through the political wringer, with endless community meetings and hearings with unrepresentative groups of constituents. Often local Planning Commissions or even City Councils will vote on whether a housing proposal will get their permits, creating an arbitrary and expensive process that stifles housing.

Improving permitting is especially important in exclusionary neighborhoods. In those neighborhoods, [wealthy homeowners often weaponize the permitting process to block new housing in their neighborhoods](#).

Do you support “[by right](#)” permitting, where cities must make clear, objective zoning and building standards, thus allowing developers following these rules to build new projects without delay?

[Short Answer]

Yes

Is there a specific policy that stops or slows down housing permitting in your area that you believe needs changing?

Yes - There is a need to address lengthy approval processes, overly-demanding parking requirements, zoning that prevents certain types of development and requires rezoning, and an understaffed planning department that all lead to delays in housing permitting.

FUNDING SUBSIDIZED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Most housing in the United States is “market-rate”. People or companies that own homes rent or sell them at a price where they can find a buyer. Even if housing becomes less expensive on the open market, there will likely always be people who can’t find housing at a price they can afford.

Public funding helps provide housing for people with very low incomes, often known as Affordable Housing. There are many different kinds of funding sources and types of subsidized Affordable Housing, but all are falling far below the needs of our communities. YIMBYs believe that we must increase funding for income-qualified housing at all levels of government. Increasing funding for affordable housing is critical to creating a future of housing for all.

Do you support increasing public funding for subsidized Affordable Housing?

[Short Answer]

Yes

What type of local subsidy for affordable housing should the municipality you are seeking to serve focus on by allocating resources? (ex: raise taxes, issue bonds, cut other spending, etc)

There should be considerations of ballot measures that would raise revenue for affordable housing. I am also in support of considering opportunities to reallocate resources and reconsider discretionary spending in other areas in order to fund affordable housing policies and programs.

FEES AND BAD INCENTIVES

There are many ways we make housing more expensive and slow down decision-making. These policies range from excessive parking requirements to height limitations. Since many local governments have limited budgets and are disinclined to tax current residents, they often try to raise funds for public needs by charging fees on new housing projects, effectively taxing future residents who can’t vote on these costs. These fees have a variety of names, such as “Inclusionary Fees”, “School Impact Fees”, “1-Percent-For-The-Arts”, “Transit Impact Fees” and many more. These fees drive up the cost of building housing, ensuring that only the most expensive projects are built. They are “stealth taxes”, paid by future residents. With added fees, housing for middle-income people is often prohibitively expensive to build.

In the long term, State and Federal Governments need to offer more help to local governments to fix these broken incentives. Cities need housing for workers and public funding to ensure transit and other infrastructure needs are met. We can’t keep taxing something we need (housing) in order to fund all the

other things we need. Reducing the fees we put on housing will make it more feasible for home builders to build smaller, less expensive new homes.

The California state Department of Housing and Community Development recommends that a municipality proposing any “inclusionary” ordinance that requires housing projects to set aside more than 15% of their units as income-restricted affordable units be supported with a nexus study that justifies the feasibility of the rate of affordability for developers. Do you plan to follow this recommendation? Please explain.

I have not seen any study suggesting that affordability levels above 15% prevents development. That being said, excessively high levels of income-restricted housing in a inclusionary ordinance can impact the feasibility of development, in which case, we will not see any new housing built. I would follow a recommendation for a nexus study that would help clarify a threshold for income-restricted affordable housing that doesn't prevent development from taking place. I want to work with developers to incentivize affordable housing production in a way that benefits both the residents and the development community.

Fees we put on housing drive up the cost of construction, making new units more expensive. What are examples of this in your area?

There are numerous fees associated with building permits in Santa Cruz County: Zoning check fees, site visit fees, building plan check fees, drainage fees, road engineering review, driveway fees for any new house with a driveway that leads to a county-maintained road, just to name a few.

TENANT PROTECTIONS

As we pursue policies for abundant housing, YIMBY Action fights for development without displacement. The YIMBY movement is in many ways a consumer advocacy movement, representing the interests of people who want more abundant, affordable housing options near jobs and opportunity for all. We are renters, homeowners, families, parents, seniors, millennials, unsheltered, and more. Policies to build the housing we need must be coupled with policies to protect people living in the housing we have.

YIMBY Action supports policies like Right to Return, Tenant-Protecting Demolition Controls, Just-Cause Eviction Protections and more. We believe these policies can be well crafted to minimize negative impacts on the overall housing stock, while helping add more stability to the lives of at-risk renters.

What are common-sense tenant protections you support?

I support rent stabilization measures like the one I successfully enacted in Capitola, as well measures to protect tenants from retaliation by landlords for asserting their rights or reporting code violations, just-cause eviction, relocation assistance in the case of no-fault evictions, and right to return.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

More questions on community connectivity, homelessness, and mixed use housing.

What can your community do to improve public transit and other options for people to get around with less reliance on cars?

Community leaders can improve public transit and decrease reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel by supporting and investing in public transit, such as the METRO transit district and the future electric passenger rail. Additionally, we can invest in active transportation infrastructure such as buffered/green bike lanes and pedestrian overcrossings.

As an elected official, have you voted against any affordable housing projects and why? If not currently in office, are there any projects that you would/have voted against?

I have not voted against any affordable housing developments

Do you believe that homelessness can be solved with the production of more homes? Please explain.

I support the housing-first model of addressing homelessness and believe that the development of tiny homes and supportive housing would go a long way in solving for homelessness. Additionally, affordable rental prices and tenant protections that prevent people from being displaced from their homes in the first place are also important measures in the fight against homelessness.

What are compassionate solutions to homelessness?

Rental assistance and affordable housing that prevents homelessness in the first place, housing first for those who are unhoused, supportive housing and wraparound services for those in need of substance abuse or mental health treatment

Building more housing will help ease the housing shortage and bring down housing prices. Dense, more walkable, more affordable communities will reduce carbon emissions, reduce segregation, reduce homelessness and build a better community. Do you agree?

Yes

In general do you support changing local housing policies to allow the construction of more housing at all levels of affordability, including both subsidized-affordable and market rate homes?

Yes

This form was created inside of Yimby Action.

