

# 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](http://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](mailto: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 \*

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**Your Name**

*As it will appear on the ballot*

Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson

**District you are running in**

*State, District, Any other relevant information*

Santa Cruz City Council District 3

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**Campaign Email**

*Best email to stay in touch about candidate forums, etc*

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

Yes, there have been policies in our community that have historically made it more challenging to build housing. While state laws have made important strides in addressing these issues, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done. To address this, we are actively implementing new policies and initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to housing construction, such as ministerial approval for qualifying housing projects, exploring the possibilities offered by SB10 and SB9, and streamlining the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). These efforts reflect our commitment to creating a more housing-friendly environment and providing solutions to our community's housing needs.

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

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

At the beginning of the year, I proposed an agenda item to the council, advocating for the creation of a sub-committee composed of council members dedicated to actively revising the Housing Element. I have maintained a close collaboration with organizations like YIMBY and COPA, ensuring that our policy directions within the Housing Element are unequivocally pro-housing. Some of the key initiatives I've championed include the introduction of ministerial approval for housing projects, particularly those designated as 100% affordable. In my nearly three years of service on the City Council, I take pride in my unwavering support for housing projects, consistently voting 'yes' on all proposals to advance our community's housing needs.

**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.*

I reference my work so far on housing and my commitment to housing on my webpage. I am a firm supporter of housing of all types (multi-story; work/live; duplexes-four-plexes; ADU's; Junior ADU's) and all levels (very low-income and low-income affordable housing; 'missing middle workforce housing; market rate housing). I believe building density housing in city centers and along transit corridors not only addresses our housing shortage challenges but also contributes to our solutions for climate response. I know we can accomplish this while preserving the unique natural beauty of our community.

**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!*

To uphold our community's core values of equity, diversity, and well-being, we must embrace housing diversity at all affordability levels and types.

**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)*

I aim for comprehensive housing diversity to foster truly inclusive and diverse communities. In the process of revising the Housing Element, our council subcommittee collaborated with staff to pinpoint opportunity zones throughout the city. We also worked to develop policies aimed at moving away from exclusionary zoning practices. As a significant step in this direction, the City Council approved a REAP 2.0 grant application. This grant seeks to establish objective standards for single-family home-zoned areas and provides pathways for implementing SB10, ultimately promoting increased density within R1 zones.

## **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?**

While we've made significant strides in enhancing the standards for ADU development, there is still room for improvement. The complexity and cost of permits can often result in delays or even halt these projects, so we are actively working on and will continue to pursue ADU incentives to streamline the process.

Challenges in developing housing units with two or more bedrooms have arisen due to acre density requirements. To address this issue, the City introduced Flexible Density Units (FDUs), which do not factor into acre density calculations. The city can also consider further adjustments, such as increasing the floor area ratio (FAR) for projects that consist of 50% or more units with two or more bedrooms.

## **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

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## **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)**

To enhance our capacity to invest in affordable housing, we must think innovatively. Our city has a track record of success in obtaining grants, a trend we intend to maintain. Notably, we were among the 6% of jurisdictions in the state that met our previous RHNA goals, earning a Pro-Housing designation. However, we acknowledge that more is needed.

I would endorse a city measure that explores tax increases or bond initiatives to bolster our local resources dedicated to affordable housing. Additionally, I have been, and will continue to advocate for directing revenues generated from the sales of city land/property into our Affordable Housing Trust Fund, further strengthening our commitment to affordable housing initiatives.

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## **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.**

Certainly. As part of our Housing Element policy framework, I've suggested that we initiate a comprehensive nexus study to reevaluate our existing inclusionary percentage, which currently stands at 20% but, taking into account density bonus laws, effectively operates at around 13%. I believe it's prudent to conduct these studies before contemplating any further increases in inclusionary requirements to ensure we do not stop housing development.

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

The City of Santa Cruz indeed has several impact fees in place. In recent years, we've undertaken a thorough review of these fees to assess their relevance and overall impacts. It's crucial to recognize that these fees are essential for funding the critical services our community relies on. Rather than merely cutting fees, I advocate for exploring innovative approaches to augment our resources and address funding needs effectively.

## **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?**

There are several avenues to enhance and extend tenant protections, including:

1. **Advocacy at the State Level:** Collaborate with state legislators to champion laws that alleviate the burden on renters, such as the elimination of application fees, the introduction of a standardized 'common application fee,' further restrictions on security deposit amounts, and the provision of the right to counsel for tenants facing evictions.
2. **Strengthen Partnerships:** Continue and enhance collaboration with the County Housing Authority to refine security deposit loan programs, possibly by pre-qualifying tenants before their apartment search.
3. **Local Employment Preference:** Implement a local employment preference policy for housing to prioritize individuals employed within the County, promoting community engagement.
4. **Childcare Integration:** Integrate childcare centers within housing construction projects to increase opportunities for affordable childcare services within our community.
5. **Invest in Tenant Protection Services:** Continue to invest in tenant protection services and legal aid programs, exploring potential sources of increased funding, such as allocating a portion of the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to renters' programs for Santa Cruz residents.
6. **Culturally Appropriate Outreach:** Provide culturally tailored outreach to tenants regarding programs like rental inspections, code enforcement, and tenant protection/assistance initiatives. This ensures accessibility and inclusivity for all members of our community.

## **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?**

As the Chair of the Metro Board, we've committed to three pivotal goals that are instrumental in enhancing our community's well-being:

1. **Affordable Housing Along Transit Corridors:** We're dedicated to building affordable housing along our transit corridors, fostering accessibility and housing solutions.
2. **Ridership Doubling in Five Years:** With the goal of doubling our ridership within five years, we're actively working to make public transportation a more attractive and efficient option.
3. **Transition to Zero Emission Buses:** We're leading the way in sustainable transportation by making the most extensive single purchase of hydrogen buses in North America, contributing to environmentally friendly transit solutions.

Our substantial progress in these areas has earned national recognition and secured over \$53 million in Federal and State grant dollars to support these endeavors.

We've launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to address community needs and modernize our services, revamping routes, and increasing frequency to boost ridership. The first phase of this revamping will begin in December 2023.

The successful pilot of a youth ride free program has positively changed perceptions among young residents, encouraging public transportation use. All these efforts collectively contribute to the realization of a transit-oriented community.

In February 2023, we're set to break ground on the Transit Affordable Housing project, a collaborative effort between the Metro and the City of Santa Cruz. This project marks a significant milestone as it will introduce 128 affordable housing units to our community, strategically located at the heart of our downtown area.

Despite the challenges, the community's voice has been heard, notably with the setback of Measure D, which highlights the vision for a future that combines rail and trail options in our community, aligning with our ongoing efforts to enhance public transportation and promote overall community well-being.

**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?**

Initially, I opposed the 831 Water Project when it first reached the council, primarily due to concerns regarding the separation of two buildings, with one designated for affordable housing and the other for market-rate housing. However, I later reevaluated my position and cast a 'yes' vote, understanding that funding limitations made it challenging to alter the project's structure.

Aside from this particular project, I have consistently maintained a 100% 'yes' vote rate on all other housing initiatives that have been presented during my tenure on the council.

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

While increasing housing production, including affordable and permanent supportive housing, is a crucial step in addressing homelessness, it's important to recognize that homelessness is a complex issue with various underlying causes, including mental health challenges, substance abuse, and systemic factors. Simply providing homes alone may not solve the entire problem. A comprehensive approach that includes housing, supportive services, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and addressing the root causes of homelessness is necessary for a more effective and sustainable solution.

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## What are compassionate solutions to homelessness?

Compassionate solutions to homelessness involve a multi-faceted approach that considers both immediate needs and long-term stability. Some key components include:

1. **Housing First:** Prioritizing housing as the first step, ensuring individuals have safe and stable shelter.
2. **Supportive Services:** Offering mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and case management to address underlying issues.
3. **Prevention Programs:** Implementing initiatives to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.
4. **Employment and Education:** Providing access to job training and educational opportunities to help individuals regain self-sufficiency.
5. **Community Engagement:** Encouraging community involvement and support through volunteer programs and outreach efforts.
6. **Collaboration:** Working together with local organizations, government agencies, and community groups to create a coordinated response to homelessness.
7. **Affordable Housing:** Expanding the availability of affordable housing options to address housing scarcity.

Compassionate solutions require a holistic, person-centered approach that seeks to address not only the immediate needs of the homeless but also the underlying causes that contribute to their situation.

**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

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This form was created inside of Yimby Action.

Google Forms