WE ARE GEN H

Candidate Questionnaire

Petaluma



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Generation Housing envisions vibrant communities where everyone has a place to call home and can contribute to an equitable, healthy, and resilient North Bay. That vision is realized through the actions of our elected and appointed leaders across all ten jurisdictions of Sonoma County. Housing is top of mind for every leader, every sector, every community member that calls Sonoma County home.

This questionnaire is designed to offer Sonoma County residents an opportunity to hear from their candidates directly about their vision for the future of housing.

All candidates were given equal opportunity to respond to the questionnaire—inclusion in the questionnaire should not be considered as an endorsement by Generation Housing. This is meant to be an educational resource to residents and voters of Sonoma County.

About Generation Housing

Since January 2020, Generation Housing has built a reputable library of housing resources read and shared by elected officials, government staff, C-suite executives and community members of a diverse audience. Candidate responses will be shared on our social media channels, our website and mailing list of over 5,000 contacts.

Generation Housing does not endorse candidates running for office. This document will be an educational resource for voters and all answers shared irrespective of the candidate.

Learn more

Mayor*

Kevin McDonnell
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John Hanania
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What role do you believe local government should play in meeting its RHNA requirements, and do you think it should stretch beyond RHNA to grow a true "housing continuum," which means diverse housing opportunities across income levels to serve our community members as their housing and family needs and assets change over time?

Housing construction is in a trap right now. RHNA is a fundamental State driven goal with income sub goals. Yes the cities should strive to meet and exceed the RHNA goals. The cities can play a role by establishment of policies to encourage housing appropriate to that city's community goals. Council members can lead in defining that goal. It has to be policy that fosters housing for all, providing incentive for the income challenged.

Of course, the City of Petaluma must meet RHNA goals and requirements. Affordable housing is a priority in our community, along with the need to budget and expend funds more efficiently and to support our residents' needs. I support a housing continuum, but I do not believe Petaluma needs to be more responsible or increase RHNA requirements to better meet our needs. I definitely support an increase in the diversity of new residents and the ability to consider Petaluma sa a place to call home.

How would you characterize the greatest set of challenges facing housing production? And what do you plan to do to help overcome these challenges?

The greatest challenge locally is to communicate the need for new housing to the existing city residents. Most believe that there is rampant grow currently. We need to concur with certain issues (traffic is an issue); while noting that growth is near non existent (Petaluma added 33 market rate home in 2025.) This requires being a loud advocate for housing, providing facts and talking about the negative consequences of a no growth community. All of which I do.

We need to make the permitting process easier and more efficient and cost effective for builders and contractors. Petaluma has a negative reputation for interaction with the Planning Department and extraordinary delays and outdated regulations for both individual homeowners who may want to build an ADU or builders/contractors who are trying to provide housing in Petaluma. Petaluma has been managed by a for profit consulting group for over 16 years for planning and community development. This needs to be changed to in-house, efficient professionals who are serving those trying to help to bring housing to Petaluma.

***Shelina Moreda did not respond.**

Mayor

Kevin McDonnell

John Hanania

Generation Housing's current initiative, Housing for Healthy Communities, is part of our effort to continue a move away from exclusionary zoning, and looks at two state laws, SB 10 and AB 1033, that we believe are perfect fits for the North Bay. SB 10 upzones to allow up to 10 units on all parcels within a half mile of transit hubs and infill parcels. AB 1033 allows the separate sale of ADUs as small homes through condoization. Both are great opportunities for increasing affordable-by-design homes as both rent and for-sale products, perfect for young families, middle income workforce, and seniors. Could we count on your support for adoption and/or implementation of these bills? Why or why not?

Yes. We are completing an General Plan update. It removes most exclusionary zoning. I am happy that the State is leading on housing policy, removing some barriers. However, if we don't communicate why and how aggressively we want to help housing production, we risk the public reversing the efforts to build.

AB1033 I can generally support with the plan being for homeowners to construct stand-alone ADUs on their property as a small home. This would likely not apply to converted garages to ADUs attached to a single family residence. Petaluma is a good community to be able to consider and provide ADUs to add to our affordable housing stock. SB10 has some challenges. The elimination of parking within a half mile of a transit station is problematic in the City of Petaluma. Transit oriented high density development has become the common goal in the Bay Area and in a city like Petaluma, individual properties and project proposals—to best serve future residents—would need to be evaluated and constructed to serve the daily needs of future residents, which may not necessarily be walking, biking and relying on public transit to move around the community.

Streamlining housing development in the entitlement and permitting processes is a powerful tool in helping to attract developers and ensure the timely approval of projects and accelerate the overall production of housing. Do you support this call to action? Why or why not?

Yes. Streamlining is needed because often the months of meetings reflect poor General Planning. Issues that are out of track, like access and flood concerns, should already be resolved prior to the development permitting stage. Objective design standards will protect local interests during development review.

I support this call to action as long as the character of the City of Petaluma and the proposals fit with the community character and will enhance quality of life for all present and future residents. We need creative planning and streamlining of permit processes to achieve the goal of providing additional affordable housing in Petaluma.

Mayor

Kevin McDonnell	John Hanania
There is work being done on a Housing Revenue Measure to be put on the 2028 Ballot. Do you support this effort? What do you believe your role in that effort is?	
Yes. A bond Measure will be a election campaign process. All elected officials need to recognize this and join the call for a solution. A bond can help with Protection, Preservation and Production. Officials need to help craft and help communicate the Bond Measure.	I would need to better understand what is involved in a new Housing Bond Measure. I am certainly open to actions that will support our ability to increase our housing stock and provide housing opportunities for those who need them.
Housing is often listed as a top priority here in Sonoma County. What does it mean to you to govern in a way that is consistent with your priorities? For instance, are you prepared to make tough budgetary decisions consistent with that priority? If you have already held elected office, can you provide an example?	
As an elected, I voted for waiver of development impact fees for Affordable housing. I am interested in EIFD and other ideas that could return property tax to a project cost.	The City of Petaluma has not managed the annual budget and expenditures in an efficient and responsible way, often wasting close to $1,000,000 on a holiday experiment and other missteps. Our City needs much better funds management and in this regard it would be possible to direct funds more efficiently to the priority of housing. I am making a commitment to our Petaluma voters that I will lead the City Council in a way that prioritizes efficient budget management and provision of services to contribute to our residents' quality of life. Providing additional housing opportunities and encouraging diversity in our population are both priorities for me as the potential future Mayor of Petaluma.

City Council District 1*

Janice Cader Thompson
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Nate Martin
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What role do you believe local government should play in meeting its RHNA requirements, and do you think it should stretch beyond RHNA to grow a true "housing continuum," which means diverse housing opportunities across income levels to serve our community members as their housing and family needs and assets change over time?

Local government must be on the front lines of addressing our housing shortage. If we want Petaluma to be a place where our kids can put down roots and raise a family, workers can live near their jobs, and seniors can remain in the community they helped build, we need more homes—and we need diverse housing choices that meet people's needs at every stage of life.

Local government has a responsibility to stand up for fair and equal housing for all people.

How would you characterize the greatest set of challenges facing housing production? And what do you plan to do to help overcome these challenges?

We have a shortage of homes because building them has become too difficult and expensive. We need to reduce unnecessary barriers, streamline approvals, and revise fees to bring down construction costs and promote more homes that are affordable by design. In Petaluma, we are updating our zoning code to make it easier to build smaller projects and starter homes while continuing to invest in deed-restricted affordable housing.

Cost and location are the two biggest challenges. We need to find a way to keep the cost down and province quality housing. Location is also very important. Housing needs to be built in a location that makes sense for both the city and its residents.

***Alan LaPierre did not respond.**

City Council District 1

Janice Cader Thompson	Nate Martin
Generation Housing's current initiative, Housing for Healthy Communities, is part of our effort to continue a move away from exclusionary zoning, and looks at two state laws, SB 10 and AB 1033, that we believe are perfect fits for the North Bay. SB 10 upzones to allow up to 10 units on all parcels within a half mile of transit hubs and infill parcels. AB 1033 allows the separate sale of ADUs as small homes through condoization. Both are great opportunities for increasing affordable-by-design homes as both rent and for-sale products, perfect for young families, middle income workforce, and seniors. Could we count on your support for adoption and/or implementation of these bills? Why or why not?	
I support creating more opportunities for smaller, attainable homes. I am particularly excited about allowing ADUs to be sold separately, giving seniors another way to remain in the communities they helped build while creating entry-level homeownership opportunities. I also am intrigued to see if/how SB 1123 can help Petaluma create more starter homes for working families and first-time buyers.	Yes
Streamlining housing development in the entitlement and permitting processes is a powerful tool in helping to attract developers and ensure the timely approval of projects and accelerate the overall production of housing. Do you support this call to action? Why or why not?	
Absolutely. If a project follows our rules and meets objective standards, the pathway to building should be transparent and certain. This is important for supporting local property owners that might want to provide a few homes, but are not going to have money for a team of lawyers like large developers. Through our zoning code update, Petaluma is working to expand ministerial approvals for projects that meet objective design standards.	Yes

City Council District 1

Janice Cader Thompson	Nate Martin
There is work being done on a Housing Revenue Measure to be put on the 2028 Ballot. Do you support this effort? What do you believe your role in that effort is?	
I would like to review the provisions of the measure to ensure it is structured responsibly, provides meaningful benefits to Petaluma, and includes strong accountability for how public dollars are spent. Addressing our housing shortage requires both removing barriers to building homes and making public investments in homes that the market cannot provide on its own.	Yes
Housing is often listed as a top priority here in Sonoma County. What does it mean to you to govern in a way that is consistent with your priorities? For instance, are you prepared to make tough budgetary decisions consistent with that priority? If you have already held elected office, can you provide an example?	
Housing cannot simply be something elected officials call a priority; we have to govern like it is one. In Petaluma, we are updating our zoning code to make building homes faster and less expensive. I support these efforts, and am also prepared to make investments in affordable housing. If we want different housing outcomes, local electeds have to champion the cause. We also have to engage at the state level; Petaluma was the first city in California to support AB 1903 by Assemblymember Wicks.	Yes
Candidates were provided the opportunity to add any additional thoughts regarding housing. Substantive responses are provided here.	
Earlier this year I coauthored an editorial with Councilmember Nau on this subject. The basic argument is that we want our grandchildren to be able to live here, and we are not alone in this. However, the fact that we graduate 700 seniors from our high schools each year but only build 100 homes is driving up prices and driving families out. I'm not going to just watch this happen, and pass the buck. I'm going to work to give people the opportunity I was blessed with.	We need to keep growing our community, and with that we need to provide safe and affordable housing for people of all walks of life.

City Council District 2

Brent Newell
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John Shribbs
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What role do you believe local government should play in meeting its RHNA requirements, and do you think it should stretch beyond RHNA to grow a true "housing continuum," which means diverse housing opportunities across income levels to serve our community members as their housing and family needs and assets change over time?

Local governments not only have a role but a duty to meet RHNA requirements in their housing elements. The City of Petaluma has an approved housing element but needs to double down on efforts to meet housing targets for very low, low, and moderate income households. I believe that Petaluma should therefore focus on providing more affordable housing choices for working families, young adults, and seniors.

The Petaluma Housing Element within the new General Plan has established zoning and mapping for 3 consecutive 8 year cycles of RHNA. We upped zoning from 4 to 6 stories on our corridors. We have a variety of policies supporting new housing of all economic levels and renovating older buildings. We are also extending the UGB at the North SMART Station for transit oriented housing to include affordable housing units and essential services to create a 15 minute community adding 3-5K residents.

How would you characterize the greatest set of challenges facing housing production? And what do you plan to do to help overcome these challenges?

The greatest challenges to affordable home choices for working families, young adults, and seniors are the cost of land and zoning limits. I supported as planning commissioner a General Plan Update that increases zoning designations to allow smaller and more affordable homes near the downtown SMART station. I will implement the general plan and support a similar North Petaluma SMART station specific plan. I also believe that publicly owned land should be dedicated to build affordable home choices.

Most of the challenges are not in our control: national and global economy, finance rates, tariffs, and state and federal regulations. We can cut or delay fees, streamline permitting, be more flexible in zoning, help developers get grants and financing, help with outreach and communication to local community. We could put out a vision of what we want in a variety of locations and proactively encourage development.

City Council District 2

Brent Newell

John Shribbs

Generation Housing's current initiative, Housing for Healthy Communities, is part of our effort to continue a move away from exclusionary zoning, and looks at two state laws, SB 10 and AB 1033, that we believe are perfect fits for the North Bay. SB 10 upzones to allow up to 10 units on all parcels within a half mile of transit hubs and infill parcels. AB 1033 allows the separate sale of ADUs as small homes through condoization. Both are great opportunities for increasing affordable-by-design homes as both rent and for-sale products, perfect for young families, middle income workforce, and seniors. Could we count on your support for adoption and/or implementation of these bills? Why or why not?

I support implementation of the proposed general plan update which I believe goes beyond SB 10 in upzoning near transit in Petaluma. I do not support opting into AB 1033 and allowing sale of ADUs as condos. I believe ADUs provide critical housing choices for low-income individuals, young adults, and seniors who do not have sufficient income and/or credit to obtain financing to purchase an ADU condo. There are already very few home choices a recent high school graduate can afford in Petaluma.

Yes. I built an ADU in my garage for my son, encouraged by the city. I did the design, permitting, and drafting with pencil and graph paper. I researched tiny homes and fully support tiny home and manufactured home construction. Current local law does not allow me to rent short term or sell. These would be huge benefits for ADU production.

I believe replacing some of our single family homes (80% of our parcels) near transit with multifamily units is our best way to house the missing middle.

Streamlining housing development in the entitlement and permitting processes is a powerful tool in helping to attract developers and ensure the timely approval of projects and accelerate the overall production of housing. Do you support this call to action? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe local governments can help reduce the cost of construction by lowering out-of-pocket costs and reducing delays in construction.

Yes. The time and effort to review applications seems to be a roadblock. Expectations, esp. local regulations, need to be more generic and uniform across cities and even counties.

I recommended to the permit department look into using an AI program for applicants (e.g. Clarity) to improve the process and cut number of cycles and time down saving staff money and time than the cost of the program.

After my ADU build I recommended staff streamline and increase efficiency. They did.

City Council District 2

Brent Newell	John Shribbs
There is work being done on a Housing Revenue Measure to be put on the 2028 Ballot. Do you support this effort? What do you believe your role in that effort is?	
Yes. If I am elected to the Petaluma City Council, I believe my role is to help secure as much financial support as possible to provide more affordable home choices for working families, young adults, and seniors. In that effort, I would support a measure which language that ensures that public funds achieve those outcomes in an equitable manner while ensuring local labor benefits with prevailing wage guarantees.	Yes. This regional bond will not only be short term solution but also offer longer term turnarounds so money can be reused to generate continuous building.
Housing is often listed as a top priority here in Sonoma County. What does it mean to you to govern in a way that is consistent with your priorities? For instance, are you prepared to make tough budgetary decisions consistent with that priority? If you have already held elected office, can you provide an example?	
I will articulate a narrative and push for outcomes that achieve my priority to provide more affordable home choices for working families, young adults, and seniors. As planning commissioner, I led on the recommendation to the City Council to reverse a decision to not upzone a large parcel adjacent to the downtown SMART station. I commented at the meeting for the upzoning while John Shribbs opposed it. The council followed the PC recommendation and upzoned the parcel.	Our new General Plan and Housing Element demonstrate a change of heart from NIMBY to YIMBY. We are still also going to support green space and community space along with infill housing. Denser housing in vacant lots, more open space near the river. The tough decisions are not so much budgetary but encouraging city like growth in a city most citizens want to keep being a small country town.
Candidates were provided the opportunity to add any additional thoughts regarding housing. Substantive responses are provided here.	
I also believe that more affordable home choices are necessary in disadvantaged communities within local governments' jurisdictions.	I am watching 17 and 24 story apartment buildings being built in San Raphael using state laws that deny city control. San Raphael needs to do this to meet RNHA requirements, we do not. Infill up to 6 stories, transforming single family parcels into multifamily housing, and ADUs will easily meet our affordable housing needs. We have enough infill areas for market rate housing too. Our residents literally want to keep a lower profile in housing mass to retain our country town character.

City Council District 3

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Karen Nau
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What role do you believe local government should play in meeting its RHNA requirements, and do you think it should stretch beyond RHNA to grow a true "housing continuum," which means diverse housing opportunities across income levels to serve our community members as their housing and family needs and assets change over time?

Local government should treat RHNA as a floor, not a finish line. Meeting our numbers is a legal obligation we must uphold, but it doesn't prevent us from creating our own city metrics to measure the number of units we need based on a family's real-world income. A real continuum means prioritizing public land for 100% affordable development and building toward social housing models like those in Europe and Singapore: publicly funded homes, managed long term by mission-driven nonprofits that can deliver on-site services.

The City of Petaluma is approving it's new General Plan which is planning for the future needs of our community, from first time home buyers to older Seniors wanting to downsize. By changing some of the zoning land-use designations, the City can approve more and diverse housing developments.

How would you characterize the greatest set of challenges facing housing production? And what do you plan to do to help overcome these challenges?

The greatest challenge to housing production, particularly affordable housing production, is financing. Close to 40,000 approved, shovel-ready affordable housing units in California are stalled by a nearly $4 billion funding gap. Additionally, land, construction financing, and fragmented entitlements affect the cost, too. As a councilmember, I'd advocate for creating a revolving affordable housing loan fund that makes low-interest gap loans directly to nonprofit developers, either on their own or jointly with the county.

Many of the housing recent developments, after receiving the project's approval and entitlements, have a problem with the funding portion of the project. The City of Petaluma is assisting the developers with fee adjustments and advice as well as making the permit process easier. An perfect example is a home owner that wants to build an ADU. The permit process is being streamlined and fees reduced.

City Council District 3

Eric Vazquez	Karen Nau
Generation Housing's current initiative, Housing for Healthy Communities, is part of our effort to continue a move away from exclusionary zoning, and looks at two state laws, SB 10 and AB 1033, that we believe are perfect fits for the North Bay. SB 10 upzones to allow up to 10 units on all parcels within a half mile of transit hubs and infill parcels. AB 1033 allows the separate sale of ADUs as small homes through condoization. Both are great opportunities for increasing affordable-by-design homes as both rent and for-sale products, perfect for young families, middle income workforce, and seniors. Could we count on your support for adoption and/or implementation of these bills? Why or why not?	
Yes, on AB 1033, and YES on SB10 with a caveat. Neither is adopted in Petaluma, and the SB10 window closes on January 1st, 2029, so I'd like us to move quickly. As a start, I'd like to see SB10 enacted with at least fourplexes, then go higher near our SMART stations and transit corridors and in less congested areas, rather than 10 everywhere at once. I'd also pair both with our own labor and affordability standards.	I need to read the bill language and familiarize myself with the bills before I can commit. Conceptually, I have some concerns about small parcels in historic downtown neighborhoods theoretically being entitled to have up to 10 units on certain parcels in historic neighborhoods with single-family homes near the Petaluma Downtown SMART train station. It may be appropriate on some parcels, but have mixed feelings on allowing this level of density on all parcels. I do like the idea of for-sale ADUs to create more housing supply and homeownership opportunities for single residents or couples looking to downsize.
Streamlining housing development in the entitlement and permitting processes is a powerful tool in helping to attract developers and ensure the timely approval of projects and accelerate the overall production of housing. Do you support this call to action? Why or why not?	
I do support this, so long as it ensures that workers and our environment are protected. I strongly support streamlining for nonprofit, cooperative, and 100% affordable developers, where predictable timelines lower costs passed on to residents. I'm cautious about blanket streamlining that trades away labor standards, environmental review, or public input for speed. Speed shouldn't come out of workers' paychecks, full stop. Tangentially, I would push to adopt a PLA policy for major city-funded construction, modeled on Petaluma City Schools' Community Workforce Agreement, and to continue upholding prevailing wage standards.	Yes, I mentioned this in my previous answer on housing hurdles, and can confirm the City of Petaluma is making progress in this area.

City Council District 3

Eric Vazquez	Karen Nau
There is work being done on a Housing Revenue Measure to be put on the 2028 Ballot. Do you support this effort? What do you believe your role in that effort is?	
Yes, and I'm supporting Prop 1 this November, the $11.25 billion Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond of 2026. A 2028 measure should include geographic equity so that every part of the county receives its share. But bonds are one-time money. The floor must be a dedicated, ongoing source of state funding. As EAH Housing's Education Advocacy and Government Relations Associate, I gave firsthand testimony in support of ACA 4 (2025), which would have dedicated 5% of General Fund revenue to affordable housing production, preservation, and protection.	I have not read the Housing Bond Measure language, and will withhold forming an opinion on this matter before the details in the ballot measure are disclosed and finalized. With any regional housing bond measure, particularly one for the entire Bay Area, I want to ensure it's equitable for all communities, so Petaluma residents aren't subsidizing projects in high population urban centers like San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland.
Housing is often listed as a top priority here in Sonoma County. What does it mean to you to govern in a way that is consistent with your priorities? For instance, are you prepared to make tough budgetary decisions consistent with that priority? If you have already held elected office, can you provide an example?	
Yes. Housing is a top priority for me because it most closely connects to my real-world experiences. As mentioned earlier, on major projects, I'd want an economic impact assessment of the jobs created, wages, benefits, and whether the work goes to local workers, before the council votes, rather than after. I'd also look at boosting revenue streams before considering cuts, advocating for policies such as vacancy and/or parcel taxes, and impact fees on larger developments, rather than a sales tax that hits the lowest-income residents the hardest.	The City of Petaluma has already reduced many development fees, reducing the amount of revenue the City would typically receive as a compromise to allow much-needed housing to be built amidst a time of high lending costs, high labor costs, and the high cost of materials needed for construction. Infrastructure has costs when development takes place, so there needs to be other ways to fund it if developers are to receive incentives to ensure they can build the housing they're seeking to create. In the City of Petaluma, to help affordable projects remain viable, we applied for and secured grant funds; the grant monies went to pay for street repairs and much needed safety measures for bikes and pedestrians.

City Council District 3

Eric Vazquez	Karen Nau
Candidates were provided the opportunity to add any additional thoughts regarding housing. Substantive responses are provided here.	
Mobile home parks are one of the last genuinely affordable paths to homeownership left in Sonoma County. I am thankful that most of our city council members have continued to work to uphold these protections by capping space rent increases at 4% or 70% of CPI, implementing the senior park overlay, and requiring a relocation impact report before any closure. I'd defend that work and help state leaders pass a right-of-first-refusal law so residents get a real chance to buy their park.	Affordability is a real concern, and as a member of the Petaluma City Council, we've taken decisive action to do what we can as a city to reduce barriers to create much-needed housing. Petaluma has been a leader in housing creation, but the challenges facing our city's housing production are complex, require experienced leadership to continue addressing, and I know more work lies ahead. I've been an advocate for both creating new housing, preserving existing affordable housing, particularly in mobile home parks, and looking at ways we can ensure that approved projects can actually be built—knowing more units is a key to meet pent-up demand. At the same time, we have to balance these needs with neighborhood character, and ensure new projects are in the right location, provide adequate parking, and are located close to transit and essential services.