WE ARE GEN H



Candidate Questionnaire

Santa Rosa

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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

Incumbents Mark Stapp and Jeff Okrepkie did not respond for the uncontested races in Districts 2 and 6 respectively.

City Council District 4

Melanie Jones-Carter
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Terry Sanders
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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?

We should try to meet or exceed RHNA numbers. We should look to build more multi-family units, townhouses, and relax development in residential neighborhoods. Our role is to manage, fund, regulate, and implement policies to produce and maintain affordable housing. I would continue to champion and expand affordable housing, strengthen emergency and transitional housing, ensure housing policy reflects local realities, and hold programs accountable to ensure public dollars deliver real results.

Santa Rosa should meet its RHNA requirements, but let's not confuse counting units with solving the problem. People don't live in a "housing continuum." They live in homes. We need more choices: apartments, ADUs, townhomes, starter homes, family housing and senior options. Build more, remove unnecessary barriers, protect the affordable housing we already have, and keep homeownership within reach.

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 biggest challenge is affordable housing; most cities have not reached the minimum level. As a city, we must communicate better to our residents the state housing requirements. It is still very expensive to get a project through the review process. Developers are not incorporating enough affordable housing in their projects; a 170-unit apartment only needs 4 affordable units to get CEQA exemptions. We need to devise more options/incentives for developers to build truly affordable housing.

Everybody says they want housing—right up until somebody tries to build it. High land, labor and financing costs are real, but the City shouldn't make a tough job tougher with unnecessary delays, fees and uncertainty. I'll push for faster, predictable permitting, clear rules, smart infill and fewer barriers. We can't control interest rates or construction costs, but we can control whether Santa Rosa is part of the solution or part of the problem.

City Council District 4

Melanie Jones-Carter	Terry Sanders
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. SB 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, I am a big supporter of both of these items. I believe meeting our community's housing needs will require thinking outside the box. We cannot continue to rely on building single-family homes or apartment buildings to meet our workforce's needs. These are two recommendations that I wholeheartedly support.	I chose "Yes" because those are the only two choices offered, but land-use policy deserves more than a binary answer. I support both bills, particularly creating pathways for ADU ownership. But the details matter. Let's make sure implementation in Santa Rosa considers infrastructure capacity, neighborhood impacts, parking, emergency access and whether we are actually creating the attainable housing these policies promise.
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, the city has started to work on streamlining some of the permitting and review process to cut costs and the timeline to development. I do, however, suggest that if the review process will pass by DRPB, that the Zone Administrator is a senior-level planner that has several years of experience and not an entry level employee.	Yes! This is exactly what I mean by Santa Rosa being brilliant at the basics. If a housing project meets our rules, the City should be organized, predictable and ready to get to "yes." Faster entitlements, clear expectations and timely permitting aren't giveaways to developers—they're good government. The only thing people seem to hate more than the high cost of housing is the solution to it. We can't demand affordability while adding unnecessary time, uncertainty and expense to building homes.

City Council District 4

Melanie Jones-Carter	Terry Sanders
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. I would wholeheartedly support a housing bond measure that funds the 3 Ps: production and preservation of affordable housing, and tenant protections. My vision and principles align with those in this document: leadership of those impacted, progressive revenue, affordability, tenant protections, social housing, anti-displacement, public benefit, good jobs, fair housing, and climate.	Yes. The question is vague. What work is being done, by whom, and what measurable benefit would accrue to Santa Rosa? I'm not opposed to a housing bond, but the details matter. If there is a clear benefit to Santa Rosa, a Council member should be at the table shaping it—advocating for our fair share, leveraging other funding, getting housing built, and demanding measurable outcomes and taxpayer accountability.
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?	
My number one priority is affordable housing. We must provide accessible housing to the workforce in Santa Rosa. Our workforce should be able to live where they work. As a city council, we must ensure that we expand healthy housing that is within reach for low-income and our "missing middle" residents.	In Santa Rosa, calling housing a priority means funding the basics that get homes built: permitting staff, infrastructure that unlocks housing, our Housing Trust, and preservation of existing affordable homes. With real budget constraints, that requires choices. I'll prioritize dollars that produce measurable housing results and redirect spending that doesn't. If housing is truly a priority, it has to survive our budget.
Candidates were provided the opportunity to add any additional thoughts regarding housing. Substantive responses are provided here.	
	We all know housing is a challenge. It gets interesting when we talk about what we're willing to do about it. Santa Rosa needs more homes, more types of homes, faster approvals, preservation of what's already affordable, and realistic paths to ownership. Success is when the people who make Santa Rosa work can afford to call it home—and when young people and families see Santa Rosa as a place where they can build a future.