

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATE RESPONSES TO DOWNTOWN BERKELEY ASSOCIATION QUESTIONS

Sept. 24, 2018

Note: Berkeleyside removed questions from the following list that did not pertain to District 8 and shuffled the order of the candidate responses.

On Aug. 31 the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA) invited City Council candidates to respond to questions regarding the future of the Downtown Berkeley.

While the DBA does not endorse candidates, we see these questions as an opportunity for the DBA to express our concerns and priorities, and then for the candidates with their responses help inform the DBA, Downtown stakeholders, and the entire Berkeley electorate about the candidate's positions on these Downtown and city-wide issues.

Unedited answers have been posted on the [DBA website](#). The same questions were asked of all candidates.

1. What are your thoughts regarding the persistent street behavior challenges in the Downtown, Telegraph and other areas in the City? Do you support the proposed [Sidewalks Ordinances passed by Council on April 26](#)?
2. What do ideas do you have for bringing BPD staffing levels up to authorized levels?
3. What are your ideas for making Berkeley more supportive of current businesses and welcoming environment for new businesses?
4. What do you see as the critical management and financial issues facing the City over the next several years?

We received responses from the following candidates:

District 8: Lori Droste, Mary Kay Lacey, Alfred Twu

You can view all of the candidate responses under the Documents/Other section of the DBA website at www.downtownberkeley.com/documents/#othe

1. What are your thoughts regarding the persistent street behavior challenges in the Downtown, Telegraph and other areas in the City? Do you support the proposed *Sidewalks Ordinances passed by Council on April 26*?

Mary Kay Lacey - District 8

There are many people in distress on our streets, and they deserve both our sympathy and appropriate services. While some street behavior is a result of people living unsheltered with mental illness, substance abuse and other challenges, others also engage in behaviors that are disruptive and at times frightening.

The best way to help the homeless is to get them housed and enrolled in services appropriate to their needs. I strongly support the Pathways Project and the Mayor's efforts to address homelessness with coordinated services and stable shelters such as Berkeley's new Navigation Center on 2nd Street. Housing First is a nationally recognized best practice for rehousing the homeless, and I support investing in programs that have proven to be successful in getting unsheltered individuals housed.

In addition, the Pathways Project is designed to help relieve pressures on Berkeley's commercial districts and neighborhoods by engaging on focused outreach to encourage homeless individuals into Navigation Centers. As spaces in the STAIR center become available, I would like to see concentrated outreach in the downtown area, such that every unsheltered individual is offered meaningful and repeated opportunities to opt into services and a path to housing. In San Francisco, this kind of sustained outreach has resulted in over 85% of individuals opting into Navigation Centers.

Berkeley's Downtown should be vibrant and welcoming. No one should feel frightened or threatened in our public spaces, and I support enforcement of rules related to public safety and threatening behavior, no matter who is involved. We have an obligation to all residents and visitors to ensure that no one is allowed to engage in behavior that compromises public health or safety. To help the City to preemptively manage these concerns, I strongly support the addition of public restrooms throughout the City, in our parking structures, public buildings, parks and other public facilities, and would like to see public restrooms similar to those found in many cities across the world. Berkeley has deployed porta-potties throughout the city, focusing on areas with large concentrations of homeless. This is an important temporary measure that should continue to be funded. We need to make sure we are providing humane facilities, and also guard against public health concerns that arise from unsanitary conditions - which negatively affect the homeless themselves, as well as other citizens.

Bringing back foot and bicycle patrols is also important for our Downtown, and for the entire City. Just the regular presence of police in an area can have the effect of discouraging inappropriate behavior, and the relationships our police can develop when present regularly are important elements in creating a respectful environment for all.

I support the Sidewalks ordinance passed by Council because I recognize that we must address the concerns discussed above. However, I understand there are legal questions still being analyzed by the City Attorney. As an attorney myself, I look forward to applying my expertise and working closely with the City Attorney on these issues.

Lori Droste - District 8

I supported the sidewalk ordinance passed by Council on April 26. I also co-authored the initial sidewalk ordinance back in 2015. Our City Attorney is reviewing the recent Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision and how that interacts with our sidewalk ordinance but I feel confident our ordinance complies with this decision. The bottom line is that I believe we should enforce our existing laws. As the only councilmember with school-aged children, I share a unique perspective of our persistent street behavior challenges in the Downtown and in our parks.

In particular, I think there are a few remaining issues that need addressing in the sidewalk ordinance-encampments, long-term placement of personal items on the sidewalk (BMC 14.48.020), the City's role in removing sidewalk impediments (BMC 14.48.210), and the enforcement of laws that assist in the free passage of persons (BMC 14.48.020, BMC 13.36.020, and BMC 13.36.030).

The City of Berkeley has the ability to do two important things with regard to street behavior: 1) provide compassionate and robust care (shelter, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, etc.) to individuals and 2) ensure that our Downtown, Telegraph Area and other parts of our city are inviting to all residents (children, disabled, and elderly). They aren't mutually exclusive. The truth of the matter is that many of my peers don't visit Downtown Berkeley because of street behavior challenges. We should not tolerate anti-social and dangerous street behavior. I am particularly adept at addressing this problem as I worked firsthand with struggling individuals throughout the Bay Area as a homeless services provider.

We also need to address crime in People's Park. I have been working with UC-Berkeley, the Telegraph Business Improvement District, neighbors and merchants to address the persistent problems within People's Park, which often spread to the surrounding neighborhood. I have been continually voicing my concern to the University that People's Park, as it is currently constituted, presents enormous safety risks to residents, children and students and it needs to change. I have encouraged the District Attorney to issue stay away orders for those individuals that are consistently problematic and violent.

Additionally, I have a proven track record in helping our addicted, mentally ill and/or homeless population get the help it needs. I have led investments in supportive housing, co-authored visionary modular housing for the homeless, wrote legislation to explore mobile showers/bathrooms, supported court-assisted outpatient treatment, and joined my Council colleagues in supporting the new Pathways navigation center by voting for it in the [Spring of 2017](#).

Homelessness is an unfortunate byproduct of our ongoing housing crisis. I have worked over the years with some of the nation's leading experts in housing affordability and anti-displacement strategies. As a result, I have earned the endorsement of Karen Chapple from the Urban Displacement Project, Carol Galante, who was Obama's assistant secretary of housing, and Michael Lens, who studies racial and economic segregation at UCLA. They trust my work on addressing housing affordability and understand that addressing homelessness and affordability needs to be grounded in sound, evidence-based policy and not catchy soundbites. I'm honored that my eight colleagues on City Council have consistently rated my legislation as the City's number one priority two out of the past three years.

Finally, homelessness is a regional issue and Berkeley can't do it alone. We need to work with our neighboring cities to pursue a shared, regional approach to homelessness. I have continually engaged in conversations with regional elected officials about this and other issues. That's why I have the endorsements of all of Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, El Cerrito Mayor Gabriel Quinto, Albany Mayor Peggy Quaid, and Emeryville Mayor John Bauters. They trust my collaborative skills, experience, and commitment to these pressing issues.

Alfred Twu - District 8

I do not support the Sidewalks Ordinance. Punitive measures that criminalize poverty simply shift people around. We need shelters open 24 hours a day so people have places to spend the day other than the sidewalk. In places where sidewalks are often blocked, the sidewalk should be widened.

2. What do ideas do you have for bringing BPD staffing levels up to authorized levels?

Lori Droste - District 8

This is perhaps one of the most important issues facing Berkeley and very few people know about it. We are facing significant recruitment and retention problems in the Berkeley Police Department. Our police officers have historically been among the most diverse and educated officers throughout the country. What many people don't realize is that our police department has to have a certain number of officers on patrol. Our numbers are so low that specialty departments like traffic enforcement could fold in order to meet our required patrol levels. Recently, my friends were in San Pablo Park with their children and parents when there was a shooting. As a result of this incident, they have become incredibly concerned with our staffing issues because not only does it affect basic concerns like traffic enforcement and investigations, it dramatically affects crime prevention.

So, why are our officers leaving? First of all, police departments across the country are facing these problems but the issue is particularly acute in Berkeley. Secondly, BPD's job has become much harder in the past few years. I have [documented](#) some of the challenges that they have faced in my newsletters. Whether it involves proposals to put citizens with no qualifications in [charge of our police department and \\$65 million dollar budget](#) or having to police [violent protests](#), it is a challenging time to work in Berkeley. I am also the only candidate in my race who supported our police officers participating in free regional disaster training this year. I have talked to police officers firsthand and they have mentioned that working closer to their homes (because housing costs are so high here) in a safer environment, with comparable pay is appealing. We need to undertake a significant recruitment and retention effort and provide professional support to our police officers.

While I oppose police militarization throughout our country, strongly support implicit bias training, and have backed oversight measures and independent investigations to ensure fair and equitable policing, it is absolutely critical to have a councilmember who has a solid comprehension of community safety issues, relies on evidence instead of ideology, and respects city employees when they are providing positive outcomes for our community. As a result, I have the sole endorsement of both Berkeley's police officers and firefighters.

Alfred Twu - District 8

The high cost of living is a major barrier to hiring - already, many Berkeley police live outside of the city and commute long distances. Better pay may be needed.

Mary Kay Lacey - District 8

The City Council has authorized - and funded - over 180 full time police positions. Unfortunately, with Baby-Boomers reaching retirement age, Berkeley, like many jurisdictions across the State and Nation, is facing many retirements. At the same time, the number of people choosing to go into law enforcement has declined, due to the availability of other well-paid careers, the many dangers our police face, and incidents of police misconduct that are reported in the news.

Another set of factors that makes this a challenging environment for recruitment and retention of Berkeley police officers is the mix of: (1) high housing prices in the inner Bay Area which means many of our officers commute long distances; and (2) the fact that we have high standards and requirements for hiring Berkeley Police officers. We require higher levels of education than others, and have exceptional training. Because every other jurisdiction in the Bay Area is also facing a surge in retirements, just like Berkeley, Police departments throughout the region often recruit Berkeley's Police officers to fill their ranks. They can offer shorter commutes and sometimes promotions. All of this creates a very challenging environment for bringing staffing levels up to what the Council has already authorized and funded.

I serve on the City of Berkeley's Personnel Board, and from that experience, I know we are working on a variety of measures to recruit and train locally. We are also committed to ensuring that salaries for the Berkeley Police Department remain generous. I am aware that the Berkeley Police Department officers recently received a raise and I support that decision.

Other measures I would propose include:

- Create more opportunities for professional development and promotion.
- Fund incentives such as recruitment and referral bonuses.
- Consider benefits that would help retain officers with long commutes.

Work collaboratively with the police, the community and the Center for Police Equity to ensure that we act in an objective and fact-based manner to achieve our policy objectives in eliminating bias in policing.

3. What are your ideas for making Berkeley more supportive of current businesses and welcoming environment for new businesses?

Alfred Twu - District 8

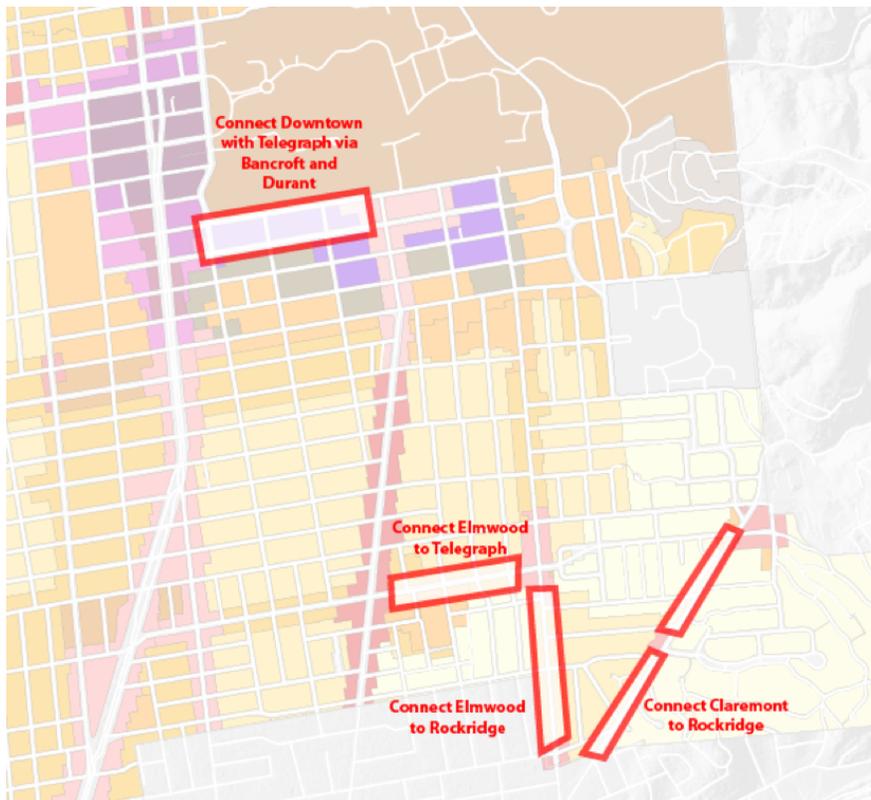
Faster Approvals for New Businesses:

It can take over a year for a new business or an existing business seeking to move/expand to get all permits and inspections needed to open. We need to accelerate this process by reducing the number of steps and increasing Planning and Health Department staffing.

Allow Businesses in More Places

Rents are high as the amount of commercial zones is capped, and many stores are being replaced with housing. As the city grows, we need more places where businesses can open. I support legalizing small corner stores in residential zones, as well as more spots for food trucks and street vendors.

In particular, we should use zoning incentives to fill the retail gaps that separate our commercial zones to encourage shoppers to visit more than one district while in town. The first priorities should be linking up Downtown with Telegraph, and linking up Elmwood with Rockridge.



More Residents = More Customers

Get a lot more homes built near business districts and bus lines, to create a larger customer base that doesn't need parking to get to the stores.

Mary Kay Lacey - District 8

With rents rising, and competition from Big Box stores in surrounding communities, and from the internet, there is enormous pressure on Berkeley's small businesses. Yet, small and local businesses are what give Berkeley much of its character. I strongly support the City's new focus and emphasis on small and local business that was in response to Councilmember Hahn and Mayor Arreguin's Small

Business Support Package, passed over a year ago. The City's Economic Development staff have been engaged in sustained outreach and have already implemented numerous improvements. As a Planning Commissioner, I am directly involved in the work that is being done to simplify and expedite the permitting processes. New businesses cannot pay rent for 6 months, a year, or more, without being able to operate, due to slow permitting processes, we need to, and will address this problem.

Lori Droste - District 8

I'm grateful to have broad support from the business community throughout Berkeley, including numerous Elmwood merchants, like the owners of Mrs. Dalloway's, Elmwood Theater, La Med, Elements, Anton Salon, and Summer Kitchen. Additionally, I helped Baker and Commons reopen quickly after the Elmwood Cafe closed its doors. Our local merchants know that I have been working nonstop on this issue over the past few years and value their input.

I work with merchants and city staff to help organize and advertise "buy local" campaigns like the Elmwood Wine Walk. In addition to establishing a Council subcommittee on Small Business to focus on these vexing problems, I also have had my students in the Mills School of Business and Policy examine trends and conduct analysis and exit interviews with many Elmwood merchants.

Additionally, the Office of Economic Development conducted a [rigorous analysis](#) of the issues our businesses face in this challenging environment for retail.

Although I have discussed with staff various iterations of a vacancy tax and I requested polling on this particular issue, our economic development experts on city staff and in the community have indicated that there currently is a much more immediate pressing issue for small businesses in Berkeley that can have positive impacts on our retail environment. Business owners surveyed overwhelmingly indicated that our permitting and licensing processes are the biggest impediment for business in Berkeley. I finalized long-awaited changes to our [retail quota system](#) and I have helped spearhead changes to our planning and zoning processes so more businesses get permits or licenses faster so don't have to pay rent for several months while they wait. This is the most important issue we should-and are-addressing this year. Granted, we still need to focus on neighborhood conditions (illegal street behavior, cleanliness, parking availability, vacancies, construction impacts), costs of doing business (rent, labor, and housing costs), competition from the Internet, and Berkeley's overall reputation as a place to do business.

I'm grateful that my work on these issues has earned me the support and endorsement of so many small business owners and the City of Berkeley's former Economic Development head, Michael Caplan.

4. What do you see as the critical management and financial issues facing the City over the next several years?

Lori Droste - District 8

The city's unfunded liabilities tied to benefits and infrastructure total \$994 million. Our future city employee retirement payments to CalPERS will increase by 50% over the next ten years. Our City needs to elect someone who has the experience in addressing these issues, is an independent thinker, and has a track record of making sound decisions for the overall wellbeing of our community.

Within the past year, I strongly advocated for a general funds reserve policy. Council took a great step forward but I made it stronger so our City wouldn't inadvertently face a fiscal crisis. Thanks to my analysis of the City Auditor's recommendations, I realized that Council needed to pass criteria and guidelines should we ever have to access those rainy day funds. This is why my background teaching public policy helps with judicious policy making. A reserve policy means nothing if there are no guidelines governing how those funds can be accessed. As a result, I put forward legislation to create criteria and guidelines so that Council can only access that rainy day fund in the event of a real fiscal emergency.

In the years ahead, City Council needs to really be vigilant in how we are spending our money. Since we have a finite amount of resources, we need to ensure that we are spending money on programs that show results. As an example, that's why I have consistently argued for accountability and performance metrics in homeless services and community agency funding. I authored the framework for a comprehensive homeless service analysis so we can determine 1) who we are serving 2) how much we are spending and 3) if it is effective.

My work on these important policy issues has garnered me the support of State Controller Betty Yee, former Councilmember Gordon Wozniak, and a wide variety of other local stakeholders. Please see my list of endorsements [here](#).

I hope you will join the Alameda County Democratic Party, the Berkeley Democratic Club, the Sierra Club and numerous other organizations, elected officials, and over 300 neighbors in supporting my candidacy. I hope to earn your support. www.loridroste2018.org

Mary Kay Lacey - District 8

Since the "new Council" and Mayor took office in 2016, the City has made significant progress in addressing longstanding fiscal challenges. First, the City is implementing a new financial software system to replace an outdated DOS-based system that had been in use for several decades. Once the new system is in place, it will allow the transparency and accountability we need. Good data supports good decisions, and this is a positive step forward.

I am also aware that the new Council in 2016 established a formal Reserves policy - something previous Councils did not undertake despite the City Auditor's recommendations. Establishing reserves will result in better bond ratings, lower financing costs, and greater security and stability for the City of Berkeley. I strongly support the establishment and maintenance of prudent and fully funded reserves. Another important step forward is the Mayor's establishment of a Budget Subcommittee, which is looking at ways to improve Berkeley's budgeting systems and processes, to increase transparency and efficiency and to provide better information for the public and Council to review and consider in budgeting decisions. We also have a wealth of expertise in our community regarding budgeting and I would support bringing together all of the resources we have to tackle the budget complexities we face.

Meeting pension obligations is a challenge for all public entities throughout the country. I support the establishment of Trusts to invest monies at higher rates than can be obtained through CALPERS. Contributions must be significant over many years to ensure trusts are adequately funded, but the

analysis provided by City Staff in their 2017 presentation shows the significant long-term benefits of these up-front investments.

Finally, I am aware that the new Planning Director is moving to implement the 150+ recommendations that came from an audit of that department. There are many changes being made right now regarding the City's budget process and I am very interested in taking a leadership role on these critically important issues.

Alfred Twu - District 8

Pension costs are a long term cost the city needs to plan for. In addition, we have more programs and services that people want. Our current revenue is insufficient. We need to bring in new businesses and construction to grow the tax base, and thereby increase revenue without raising the tax burden on small businesses.