



Empower Oakland 2025 Candidate Questionnaire

Oakland City Council District 2 Special Election, 2025

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

Empower Oakland is asking candidates to complete a short questionnaire. These submissions will be published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters and will be unedited for spelling and grammar. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their candidate endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made in mid-February.

*Please email the completed questionnaire as a .docx or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com by **5pm on Monday, January 27th**. Please include a headshot (square/vertical headshot, in JPG or PNG format, 1000-1500px and <2MB, and please name the file).*

Candidate name: Charlene Wang

Email: charleneforoakland@gmail.com

Phone number: 510-560-3494

Campaign website: www.charleneforoakland.com

Social media handles:

- X: <https://x.com/charlenewang>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Charlene-for-Oakland-City-Council/61558711491827/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/charleneforoakland/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/charleneawang>

Expected total fundraising amount: \$80,000

Funds raised to date: \$29,000

Background & general questions

1. What is your background in Oakland? How have you been involved in local government? What specific experiences do you have across housing, homelessness, public safety, public infrastructure, budget, and good government?



Oakland was the formative city of my childhood. We spent weekends at my grandparents' West Oakland apartment and enrolled in the youth orchestra at Laney College. I'm from a family and extended community with a lot of first- and second-generation Chinese Americans. Oakland's bustling Chinatown was a necessary source of stability and community.

I left home to go to college and graduate school, earning my bachelor's degree from Columbia and my masters from Harvard Kennedy School of Government. My career in public service at local, state, and federal levels has been about helping redesign government programs to deliver better results. I was appointed by the Biden-Harris administration to launch a \$4.2 billion Department of Transportation initiative, Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods. Two projects are being funded in District 2 by this program, including plans to address dangerous highway underpasses in Jack London and Chinatown, and a greenway between Lake Merritt and San Leandro with construction already underway. I've worked to reform homeless response systems to take people off the street quicker.

I left DC to come home to Oakland and be close to my family. Even prior to returning, I served on the Family Violence Law Center's board to help fund and advocate for services for domestic violence and sex trafficking victims in Oakland. I'm also an Alameda County Commissioner for Consumer affairs, where we tackle issues such as fraud targeted at seniors, advocating for lower energy rates, and home ownership.

I decided to run for office after experiencing a vehicular assault. Officers were unable to arrive while witnesses were still available. This incident prompted me to look into Oakland's public safety policies. The more I learned, the more I wanted to be part of the solution.

The winner of this election will have just months before a major budget vote. District 2 needs a leader that can dive into policy details and has experience holding government programs accountable.

2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?

Crime is the top issue facing District 2 and Oakland as a whole. Jack London and downtown businesses are closing because of repeated break-ins. People are avoiding going out altogether because they expect bipping. Shops in Chinatown and Little Saigon keep closing for the same reasons, and the corridor connecting them is one of Oakland's highest gun violence hotspots. San Antonio is afflicted by sex trafficking, gambling dens, gun violence, and encampments. Until Oakland gets a handle on violence and property crime, our economy cannot thrive.

Another major problem facing District 2 and the city is Oakland's budget deficit. Unless we get our finances under control, and insist on accountability in our spending, this will continue to spiral out of control. My experience managing large government budgets, structuring programs for efficiency, and finding cost-saving opportunities for administrative consolidation would all help the council navigate this challenging budget environment.

Oakland deserves a government as resourceful and creative as its people. I think our brightest spots come from communities working towards solutions.



I've met with neighbors who bonded over the Clinton Park cleanups and organized to demand better from city hall, transit riders working for a San Antonio BART station, non-profit developers building affordable housing for Chinatown seniors, conservationists preserving Oakland's Lake Merritt gem, bikers who lost loved ones to reckless drivers and banded together to win the safety infrastructure they deserve, and so many more. These community voices working for change make me optimistic for Oakland and District 2. I've built my platform with these voices in mind and, if elected, I'll amplify their calls for change in city hall.

3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

I'm running for office because my experience at local, state, and federal levels of government can help our city government find solutions to the serious problems we are facing.

From my work in the Biden-Harris administration, I see immense opportunity to bring in new blue-collar jobs in renewables and clean transportation. We have abandoned warehouses in East and West Oakland, environmental justice communities that are in need of jobs. Oakland was built on manufacturing and with our port, workforce, and proximity to major tech and investment hubs, has the capacity to be a manufacturing powerhouse. I'll work to court green manufacturing companies, use tax incentives to seal the deal, and work with our school district and Department of Workforce Development to establish career pathways into this sector.

With limited resources, District 2's next councilmember will need to think creatively about accomplishing multiple goals at once. I've demonstrated this capacity through my work creating the Federal Highway Administration's first pilot program to connect people just leaving prison with construction jobs. People who have served time face discrimination when seeking jobs; they deserve dignified work and the chance to repair their lives. This type of job program is also an investment in public safety. Statewide, about 46% of people who leave prison will commit crimes again. When they have job opportunities and services, that figure falls in half to 23%. Oakland pays around \$26 million for pothole related liability every 3 years. A program that hired formerly incarcerated people to repair potholes would benefit our infrastructure as well as the people doing the work. I'd work to bring a program like this to Oakland. My connections to Asian American philanthropic groups can also bring in funding to District 2's cultural districts, Chinatown and Little Saigon, in order to ensure that these districts thrive for the economic benefit of the entire city.

4. This special election is for a shortened term, making it crucial that the winning candidate can be effective immediately. What concrete steps are you taking to prepare, and what will be your strategy for making an impact in this shortened time frame?

I have already begun engaging key stakeholders; city staff, community leaders, and more to understand their needs and priorities. I am the only candidate in this race who has



been responsible for managing large government budgets, ensuring that public funds are efficiently spent, and navigating the complex grant-writing process. My work experience and community engagement make me uniquely able to lead in such a short timeframe. I'm endorsed by Interim Mayor Jenkins, Councilmember Ramachandran, County Supervisor Lena Tam, and former District 2 councilors Pat Kernighan and Danny Wan. All of these leaders know that I am ready to lead.

Public safety

*The following questions ask for your perspective on improving **public safety** in Oakland.*

5. What specific and measurable improvements in public safety will you deliver for Oaklanders over the next two years? What existing investments would you increase, reduce or eliminate to ensure adequate resources for you to meet your goal?

I'll measure success by reductions in crime, 911 wait times, and overtime expenses. Today's police department is dangerously understaffed. Among 295 cities with populations above 100,000, Oakland had the 4th highest crime per capita before the recent spikes. We also have the 4th highest caseload of crimes per officer in the country. Consequences of understaffing include long 911 wait times, an average of over \$30 million overtime annually, and higher rates of burnout among officers that a growing body of research has connected to increased use-of-force complaints. I'll work to recruit more officers and leverage technology such as license plate readers to improve law enforcement efficiency.

We need to use technology to make our current officers more efficient. We need speed and Flock cameras to capture footage of crimes in the act, and to invest in adequate cloud storage to store the footage for officers to retrieve in time. We should invest in drone technology that can arrive first on the scene and provide critical information back to police for smarter resourcing, such as whether 2 or 10 officers are needed to respond to an incident. Officers aren't broadly using voice to text dictation software that we have already purchased to cut paperwork time. We need a department wide technology strategy that makes sure we are using the best available technology for efficient service.

6. Please speak to the effectiveness of Oakland's non-sworn responses to public safety issues. Which, if any, are successful and should be continued? Which, if any, are not successful and should be discontinued?

Oakland Police Department should increase the number of OPD civilian employees who respond to burglary and other property crimes after the fact to take reports, rather than having sworn officers knocking on doors at 3 a.m. to do so. This will free officers to respond to emergencies faster.

The County's Department of Behavioral Health currently runs a very successful program where social workers respond with OPD officers to calls where the likely problem is a mental health or drug issue. The program is very effective and is welcomed by officers. Unfortunately, it lacks funding to be implemented at scale. I would engage fellow City leaders to advocate with County leaders to expand this very effective program.



I want MACRO reforms but do see value in non-sworn responders. When some people think of police, the Riders, Oscar Grant, Celeste Guap, or other instances of brutality come to mind. I want those people to have a number they are willing to call if they see someone in crisis. Done right, this could reduce overdose deaths, connect people with treatment, free officers to answer other calls, and enable nonviolent crisis resolution.

As implemented, MACRO has not lived up to its goals. Most calls respond to the same individuals again and again. This shows that MACRO is not connecting people with resources, or compelling treatment, when needed. I'll urge the City Administration to make MACRO more effective by co-administering the program with the county, implementing case management, and connecting people meaningfully with follow-up resources. I will also work to ensure that data collection and performance metrics are in place to evaluate their impact and inform future investments.

7. What is the appropriate staffing level of sworn police officers for the City of Oakland?

We should have at least 900 officers. The two main barriers are Oakland's tight budget and poor academy recruitment/graduation rates.

To add officer capacity in the short term, we should invoke a disaster declaration to qualify for regional assistance under California's Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System. Neighboring cities call on Oakland firefighters during their emergencies, we should call on their law enforcement resources in our hour of need. This declaration would also give us access to Alameda County's emergency dispatch system to improve 911 response times. It's a short-term fix, but we cannot afford to wait.

A major barrier to adequately staffing is that our police academies do not admit or graduate enough officers to fill positions. One of Oakland's former State Senators, Nancy Skinner, wrote and passed SB 960 which allows police departments to hire undocumented immigrants who have spent most of their lives in the country. We should take advantage of this law to add badly needed officers and to improve representation and trust with immigrant communities.

District 2 includes parts of International and San Antonio that are heavily impacted by sex trafficking. We know that traffickers prey on immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, because they can leverage people's fear of deportation to maintain dependence and control. Having DACA officers on the force would help survivors and witnesses feel safer calling for help.

I hear a common refrain that people don't want to be police officers. That's not true. Each year, thousands of people apply to enroll into Oakland's police academies and yet only [1-2%](#) are accepted. We need to review this process to ensure qualified applicants are not being weeded out. I'll advocate for data collection on English as a Second Language applicants to see if there are language barriers complicating the process. I'll also encourage the police academy to set up training for aspiring officers to improve qualifying performances.



8. What strategies would you prioritize to address crimes like gun violence, retail robbery, sex trafficking, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others?

We need rapid law enforcement response to these emergencies.

San Francisco had some success deterring auto theft and bipping by placing GPS trackers in cars or purses/bags/etc. within them. We should use this strategy. Once a few thieves lead police to their front door, others will start thinking twice before stealing.

I'm going to focus on trafficking because International Blvd., the hub of Oakland sex trafficking, is in District 2. Sex trafficking is a horrific crime that also brings in more violence, drug trafficking, and other illicit activity. I will work with our new DA to connect survivors with services and update Oakland's municipal code to ensure robust penalties for johns and traffickers. Officers are only allowed to tow johns' vehicles after their third offense, as a way to penalize and deter solicitation of sex. I will work to remove restrictions like this and empower our officers to go after johns and traffickers.

I'll also work with motels and hotels to ensure that there are incentives to report trafficking. I'll also work with Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils and community organizations to make sure that City departments are hearing their demands to take action and are responding appropriately.

9. Taking into account Oakland's governance structure, what specific steps would you take to align council, staff, OPD, the City Administrator's office, the community, and other stakeholders around your public safety priorities?

At the Council level, I'll work to set clear priorities, program expectations and goals at the start, and ensure that departments have capacity to track results. Council should be a partner in reviewing metrics and refining programs for effective delivery.

Homelessness and housing affordability

*The following questions ask for your perspective on **reducing homelessness and improving housing affordability** in Oakland.*

10. What specific and measurable improvements in Oakland's homelessness and housing affordability crisis will you deliver for Oaklanders over the next two years? How do you plan to deliver these homelessness and housing affordability wins for Oakland? What investments might you advance, reduce, or eliminate to ensure adequate resources are available to meet your housing and homelessness goals?

It shouldn't have taken a homicide for Oakland to finally act and shut down the E. 12th street encampment. Oakland has been awarded a \$7.2 million Encampment Resolution Fund grant. I will work to quickly train first responders in their role of compelling treatment through CARE Courts. Every homeless person has unique needs, and the city is right to conduct outreach and build trust with people living in encampments. There must also be a deadline.

I am also running to begin a new strategy for homelessness. Current rules trap people on the streets by blocking early interventions. When a program takes federal money, they agree to a set of rules called "coordinated entry." These assign people a standardized



“vulnerability score” and prioritizes help to people with the highest scores, ahead of others. The result is a seemingly endless wait list that traps people on the streets getting worse while they wait for help.

The best time to intervene is early. The longer people are on the streets, the likelier they are to experience traumas. This is cruel indifference, and it makes help later on more difficult and more expensive.

This is where Oakland should step in. Cities don’t use federal dollars and can ignore “coordinated entry.” That means, for someone short on rent, we can temporarily subsidize housing as a benefit to a city job. From tree planting to trash cleanup and blight removal, there's a lot that needs doing. Along the way, we can connect people to county services, career paths including apprenticeships, or whatever else they need to live comfortably.

To be clear, this option isn’t possible for everyone. It would, however, help many people while freeing the county to focus on those who need permanent support.

11. Please discuss your perspective on the following topics:

- a. The respective roles of affordable (below-market-rate) housing and market-rate housing

Both are badly needed. There isn't enough supply to match demand, driving prices up. Market rate developments expand our tax base, sometimes include below-market-rate units, and pay into the affordable housing trust fund through impact fees. Our current shortage of affordable and market-rate housing drives fierce competition for available units and drives up rents, eroding renters' abilities to save and get ahead. I'll approve new housing, increase height limits, and simplify the permitting process to bring new housing to market faster.

- b. The City’s Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms

I support upzoning, we need higher buildings in more areas to meet demand. This will also help improve foot traffic, bring customers to struggling businesses, and broaden our community.

We can also lower the cost of new housing, which is passed along to renters and buyers, by simplifying the process to build. Let’s hire more staff to approve building permits, and gain the property tax revenue they bring, faster. Similarly, hiring more fire inspectors can speed the process up. We also need to ditch purely aesthetic building standards. Our recent standards required that buildings have at least two facade materials. This is a vanity measure that adds complexity and cost for builders that is ultimately passed along to renters.

- c. Oakland’s Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward

Implementation of the Encampment Management Policy has been poor, as evidenced by a past Auditor’s report and what we see with our own eyes. One of the major goals of the Policy was to make sure that encampments were not happening in public parks or adjacent to schools.



The City's enforcement of both those objectives has been sparse and inconsistent. Examples include the Lake Merritt parks, Clinton and San Antonio parks, Garfield school and more. Effective leadership and management of the Policy is needed, as are clear performance measures. More resources are certainly needed, but the city could do a much better job even with existing resources if the program was managed properly. A lack of transitional services and temporary housing is also slowing down the encampment closures. Last week, an encampment closure along Lake Merritt resulted in city workers connecting a person living there with shelter and support. I want to see more outcomes like this. Our response should prioritize comprehensive support for unhoused residents, including access to shelters, healthcare, and employment resources. The County needs to be a partner with the city in providing the transitional services.

d. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment We need to take full advantage of CARE Courts to compel treatment. Supervisor Lena Tam and I have already begun discussing ways that Oakland and Alameda County can better cooperate on this matter.

Public infrastructure

*The following questions ask for your perspective on improving Oakland's **public infrastructure**.*

12. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver with respect to Oakland's public infrastructure over the next two years? How do you plan to deliver these improvements?

We need to speed up the permitting and contract process across the board. Pre-authorizing Department of Transportation repairs would free needed road maintenance from micromanagement and delays from the council. I'll also work to prioritize investments that revitalize business corridors, and the tax revenue they should bring. The planned I-880 underpass sidewalk upgrades connecting Chinatown and Jack London can help restore foot traffic. This project is being funded through the Reconnecting Communities initiative that I launched at the federal level. If elected, I'll continue supporting these kinds of investments.

13. What are the biggest problem(s) Oakland faces when it comes to public infrastructure? How might we address these challenges, and what trade-offs, if any, might we need to consider?

Oakland's aging roads, insufficient stormwater management systems, and inadequate street lighting in underserved areas are among the city's biggest infrastructure challenges. Years of deferred maintenance and underfunding have exacerbated these issues. To address these problems, I will prioritize securing additional funding through



public-private partnerships and implementing data-driven approaches to allocate resources effectively.

14. Please discuss any specific improvements you expect to make during your term related to:

a. Blight, litter and dumping

Oakland has some of the highest trash collection rates in the county. I will work to renegotiate our contract with California Waste Solutions and look into other contractors. We need to use license plate readers to catch people who illegally dump and conduct sting operations to establish deterrence. We also should revisit policies that have prevented the City from cleaning up the piles of trash surrounding existing homeless encampments, even though the encampment is not yet slated for removal.

b. Road repair & repaving

I'll work to expedite our contracts for road maintenance and repair. Delays result in injuries, damaged vehicles, and liability for the city. I'll monitor the use of voter-passed City infrastructure bonds to make sure the City is delivering on its promises to voters.

c. Bike/pedestrian safety and public transportation

We need to install a protected bike lane along Lakeshore before another biker is killed. I'll work with OakDOT to launch a quick-build program to install low-cost barriers to sideshows and reckless driving. I'll support public transportation by approving more housing near transit hubs and continuing the Jack London to Alameda ferry.

d. Streetscape improvements (trees, parklets, etc)

I'll fight for District 2's fair share of our urban forestry fund. Much of our district, from Chinatown to San Antonio and parts of Cleveland Heights, has less than 20% urban tree cover. This is well below the city's average. From the last available data, District 2 and District 5 were the only districts to lose more than 5% of existing tree cover.

As we face higher temperatures, tree coverage will be more important than ever. Urban canopy has been shown to reduce neighborhood temperatures by 2-9° Fahrenheit helping nearby houses save up to 25% of their heating bill. Each year, Oakland trees intercept and absorb 100 million gallons of stormwater and remove 679,080 pounds of air pollutants.

e. Stormwater management

The city is determining how to spend a \$1 million water quality grant for Lake Merritt improvements. I'll work with community leaders like Dr. Richard Bailey and the Lake Merritt Institute to ensure that it is effectively spent. We need to lease 5



more aerators and a second oxygen machine to address deoxygenation that is leading to fish die-offs. We also need filter nets near Glen Echo Creek and downtown curb inlet filters to prevent runoff into our lake.

Fiscal issues & budget

*The following questions ask for your perspective on **addressing Oakland's immediate fiscal crisis and long-term structural budget deficit.***

15. How do you plan to address Oakland's immediate fiscal crisis AND long-term structural budget deficit? What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver over the next two years? Please discuss your specific perspective on:

a. How you might increase general fund revenues

Let's expand and support cultural zones like District 2's Chinatown, Little Saigon, and Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District. Through tax incentives, these zones promote entrepreneurship and wealth creation among communities that are too often left out. District 2's Chinatown used to be the city's #1 revenue source. Through public safety, approving more housing, and bringing emergency tax relief to small businesses, we can help bring back foot traffic and tax revenue.

I'll go after renewable energy manufacturing. Our major port, vacant industrial warehouses, and proximity to tech and investment hubs make Oakland a prime location to lead our energy transition. This could bring in badly needed tax revenue and blue-collar jobs. I've asked renewable manufacturing founders why they don't set up shop in Oakland. Crime is the #1 answer, but a close second is that Oakland doesn't really go after them. Other cities set up booths at renewable incubators, their councilmembers follow up with companies and try to seal the deal. I'll seek renewable energy manufacturers, offer tax incentives while they are getting started, and work to simplify the permitting process. This could be a major opportunity if we are proactive.

We should leverage city properties by making more advertising spaces available. New York City brings in \$40 million annually this way. Oakland won't earn that much, but we can bring in something.

I'll work to bring on full time grant writers. Although California will probably not be looked upon favorably under the new federal Administration, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and other grants are still going out. There are also grant opportunities at the state level. Oakland was the only city in California to miss a \$17 million retail theft grant, leaving money our taxes already paid for on the table. I'll put my experience leading a major federal grant program to help Oakland make headlines for groundbreaking, not missed deadlines.

We should attract tourists. We are the New York Time's #1 food city in America for a reason. We need to promote our city, including with our film incentive program that yields short-term economic multipliers and long-term tourism. To succeed, we **must** improve safety in Oakland.

b. How you might reduce expenses (specifying any cuts you might make)

Some City employees in management roles are overpaid. I will work to find consensus savings with cuts here.



Explore department and administrative consolidation: last year's move to consolidate payroll across city departments was a great start and reduced overhead. I'll work with other councilmembers, city employees, and community stakeholders to find opportunities for more.

Carefully review city contracts: Oakland spent over \$60 million on homelessness programs that did not track services rendered, the number of people helped. We must ensure that city contractors are held accountable for results.

Ensure overtime accountability: departments need strong tracking and approval systems to ensure that overtime is used responsibly. The goal isn't to limit services, but to prevent abuse.

Reform MACRO: I support the concept of alternative mental health responders. The reality of today's MACRO is spotty service mostly concentrated on helping the same people again and again. Getting people to either self-sufficiency or sustainable support needs to be a goal.

Civilianize police internal affairs: we are paying full police salaries for officers to sit behind desks reviewing their colleagues. Worse, OPD's internal affairs has been a central concern for Judge Orrick, the federal judge overseeing our federal monitor. If we want to stop paying our monitor \$1 million every year, we must show that we can hold our police force accountable. Making internal affairs at least partially civilian would get more officers away from their desks and back on patrol. This would immediately expand police coverage, improve accountability, and clear a path to parting with our costly monitor.

- c. How you might better manage unfunded liabilities, including pensions and deferred maintenance

I'll explore refinancing pension interest payments to take advantage of lower rates and enable near-term savings.

16. What are the largest contributors to Oakland's budget challenges? In your opinion, why have previous Councils/Mayoral administrations failed to address these challenges?

Last year's Budget Advisory Commission highlighted how city programs often do not track results or have a sense of which goals to prioritize. My government management experience positions me to add clarity at the outset and make sure there is a structure for accountability and evaluation.

17. How will you maintain objectivity on fiscal matters in the face of pressure and specific budget asks by groups and organizations that endorse you?

Oakland has given so much to my family. I'm running because I see my city suffering and want to put my experience to work on its behalf. You can trust my objectivity because I have provided detailed explanations of my policies and underlying reasoning available. I'm talking with leaders throughout District 2 and will maintain a culture of community engagement and accountability if elected. Bringing people into the process is the best way to ensure that their interests are respected.



18. Oakland businesses are an important contributor to the local and regional economy, and — directly and indirectly — to the city’s financial resources. What are the major challenges faced by Oakland businesses? What specific steps will you take to ensure that Oakland businesses can thrive and are able to create more jobs and improve the Oakland economy?

Crime is the top challenge facing Oakland businesses. The negative impact of crime on local businesses and the reputation of Oakland has decimated our real estate transfer tax, business tax, and hotel tax revenues. The budgetary effects of crime are one of many reasons why I think “defund the police” is self-defeating. By underinvesting in law enforcement, Oakland has emboldened criminals and eroded its tax base.

I was offended to see the city billed businesses like Snail Bar for glass debris from their own break in. Small business owners feel like the city is kicking them when they’re down. We have to get serious about supporting small businesses.

It takes too long to start a business in Oakland. I’ll work to streamline permitting, including temporary permits that let businesses start some operations while they wait for complete approvals.

Workforce shortages are a problem for businesses. I will collaborate with business associations and economic development agencies to create targeted programs that address workforce training and retention. Expanding job training partnerships with community colleges and nonprofits can equip Oakland’s workforce with the skills businesses need to thrive.

I’ll also support programs like the Sunset Market. This event brought business to vendors at Clinton Square Park and fostered a sense of community in the Little Saigon Area. More events like this, with more publicity, and assured mass transit routes are all ways to help. The Oakland to Alameda Ferry brings customers to struggling Jack London businesses. I’ll continue to support these connectivity investments that improve commerce, air quality, and mobility for people without cars.

Governance

*The following questions ask for your perspective on **improving governance** in Oakland.*

19. To what extent is the City of Oakland meeting or not meeting your definition of good government? As a councilmember, how would you contribute to improving government effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency in Oakland?

Criminal corruption charges have been filed against a former mayor. City Council awarded \$2 million more than the City Attorney’s recommendation in a settlement with the very company raided by the FBI. Our police department still pays for polygraph “lie-detector” tests that have been discredited for decades. \$60 million was spent on



homelessness without clear accounting of services rendered. At present, Oakland meets no definition of good government.

To improve governance, I'll focus on anti-corruption and efficient spending.

Our chief ethics enforcer quit last year because he didn't have the resources to do his job. Gutting ethics enforcement is penny wise, pound foolish and has made city government an easy mark for bad actors. I'll fight for ethics reform.

We also need to get our expenses under control while retaining essential services. I've talked to a public works employee who encountered 4 dead bodies on the job last year. Others described frequent contact with biohazards, crisis situations, and a sense that City Hall was not listening to them. People doing difficult, necessary jobs shouldn't bear the pain from City Council's mistakes.

To prevent painful, across the board cuts, I'll advocate for the adoption of performance-based budgeting, which links funding to measurable outcomes. Last year's Budget Advisory Commission found that programs do not adequately track outcomes, underscoring the need for reform.

20. More specifically, how might the city provide greater oversight and public accountability in contracting, grant-making, and outcomes/performance management?

This is a big part of my current job at the EPA. Last year, I helped identify contractor fraud and was able to reallocate funds towards programs that truly advanced environmental justice. Transparency will be a cornerstone of my approach—I will champion regular public reporting on city initiatives, expand access to open data, and hold frequent town halls to keep residents informed and engaged. By fostering a culture of accountability and collaboration, we can rebuild trust and strengthen governance in Oakland.

21. Oakland has a unique hybrid governance structure where power is shared between the mayor, council, and city administrator. How would you work effectively within this structure as a councilmember?

A City Councilmember can highlight major neighborhood issues, advocate for residents, and follow up with department heads and the city administrator. Having worked on a broad portfolio of issues across local, state, and federal levels of government, I am prepared to lead quickly.

The council, like any specialized body, can become its own bubble. I'll always be prepared, but I never think I have all the answers. I've made a point to seek out change makers and leaders throughout the district to ensure that my policies will improve their lives. If elected, I'll bring that spirit of community outreach and accountability to the council.