



PRESIDENT CRISTINA GRAPPO

Empower Oakland Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Oakland mayoral 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 our candidate 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: PRESIDENT CRISTINA GRAPPO

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Phone number: (510)205-0595

Campaign website: TheWhiteHouseNews.com

Social media handles:

- X: @PresCNGrappo
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002770317473>

- Instagram: @prescngrappo
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/prescngrappo/>

Expected total fundraising amount: \$2000

Funds raised to date: \$2000

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?
Highlights from my background include being born and raised in Oakland, graduating from Bishop O'Dowd High School. I earned my MBA from the University of Phoenix Oakland campus and have worked in business, healthcare, and government within the Oakland domain. For local government, I have worked on mayoral campaigns, contributed to Oakland Townhall meetings, and volunteered at Saint Vincent de Paul in the capacity of organizing and leading job fairs and servicing the homeless, while also undertaking Oakland's Court Information Bureau and serving as a poll worker. I also hold light accounting experience from an assortment of jobs. In addition, my good government skills originate primarily from student council and unique internships.
2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?
Oakland faces economic and safety challenges. This includes many businesses folding in the downtown area and business robberies throughout Oakland. The bright spots include crime waves decreasing, fresh leadership coming forward, and transportation, recycling, and waste solutions tackling climate change.
3. Why are you running for office, and why are you uniquely qualified to serve in this position?
I am running for Oakland Mayor due to my passion for Oakland politics. My goal is to guide and implement Oakland policies while serving as a role model. I believe I am the best candidate because I will make Oakland citizens feel valued, listen to their concerns, and be adaptable to their needs. As a bilingual poll worker and through my contributions to my patients' lives, I have already made significant impacts.
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 am conducting research, engaging with professional groups, and staying informed about current events. Strategies for effective short-term mayoral leadership include: assembling a team, fostering collaboration, becoming knowledgeable about innovation, utilizing data and digital tools, asking "why?", and staying connected.

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?
Over the next two years a mayor, police will be instructed to cease responding to non-criminal calls, discontinue responses to cold calls (incidents occurring more than 24 hours before the call), refrain from addressing non-criminal calls related to the homeless and homeless encampments on the emergency line, focus efforts on combating violent crime, and enhance investigative processes. Community service and other government agency programs will be identified and recommended. Increased mental health services, employment opportunities, housing initiatives, violence intervention programs will be extended to our neighborhoods. The Police Commission will continue to train when it is right and when it is wrong to apply deadly force and manufacture greater accountability measures.
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?
We should host another police academy in July to prevent overworking our officers. A Business Watch program can help reduce theft. Instead of defunding the police, we should create affordable housing to support our officers and improve rapport.
7. What is the appropriate staffing level of sworn police officers for the City of Oakland?
1110 sworn-in full time police officers are appropriate to prevent overtime.
8. What strategies would you prioritize to address crimes like gun violence, retail robbery, sex trafficking, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others?
Community-Based Violence Interventions work and include hospital-based intervention programs, group violence intervention, and community-driven crime prevention through urban design.

Hospital-based violence intervention programs connect experts and community members with victims in trauma centers to prevent retaliation and provide immediate and long-term support. Violence interrupters focus on building relationships and supporting survivors by implementing justice solutions that address the harm from violent crime.

Group violence intervention involves cooperation between law enforcement, community stakeholders, and service providers to deter future violence by identifying and supporting those most at risk. Trust and accountability between law enforcement and communities are crucial.

Community-driven crime prevention through environmental design uses architecture and urban planning to create safe public spaces, reducing crime and gun violence by restoring vacant lots and investing in the physical environment. Safe-looking communities make people feel safe.

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

To establish my public safety priorities, I will utilize informational memos, PowerPoint presentations, and strategic updates to our website at www.oaklandca.gov.

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? Complementing rental assistance with improved health and social services, known as Housing First, effectively helps people secure permanent housing. Ensuring rental assistance and supportive services for all in need is crucial for providing safe homes. Oakland spends over \$120 million annually on homelessness, but it could cost nearly \$4.5 billion to build and operate permanent housing.
11. Please discuss your perspective on the following topics:
- a. The respective roles of affordable (below-market-rate) housing and market-rate housing
Market-rate housing can raise rents and burden lower income households. I oppose it for this reason. Affordable housing stabilizes neighborhoods, reduces vacancies, and fosters community development. I support it because community development can include urban gardens.
 - b. The City's Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms
Oakland's Housing Element proposes several zoning reforms to increase housing production capacity by 2031 and create opportunities for affordable and "missing middle" housing in high-resource neighborhoods. The rezoning proposals include: Housing Overlay, by-right approvals for housing element sites, Rockridge District Rezoning, commercial corridor height increases, and the Missing Middle Program. These reforms aim to enhance the city's housing availability and diversity.
 - c. Oakland's Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward
Currently, Oakland's Encampment Management Policy prohibits homeless residents from living near homes, businesses, schools, parks, waterways, and shelters. Immediate closure with less than 12 hours' notice applies to active fires, criminal investigations, fire hazards, and threats to critical infrastructure like train tracks or bridges. A 24-72-hour notice is given for pervasive criminal activity, combustible waste, construction zones, or disease outbreaks, providing temporary emergency shelter while working with housing providers for permanent solutions. Timely follow-through and upkeep are needed moving forward.
 - d. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment

The New Oakland face-to-face Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) serves children, adolescents, and adults with emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues. It is not suitable for those with primary substance abuse problems but can assist individuals with primary mental health diagnoses and secondary substance use disorders. The IOP is less intensive than the partial day program, occurring three times a week for three hours each session. It aims to gradually reduce professional support while maintaining strong therapeutic care to ensure continuity and progress.

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?

I will support the Major Projects Division in delivering infrastructure improvements for safer, sustainable, and equitable connections between West Oakland, Chinatown, Downtown, Old Oakland, and the Jack London District. Improvements include vegetation clearing, erosion control, utility line updates, roadway enhancements, and stormwater management.

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 is currently grappling with substantial budgetary challenges, experiencing a present shortfall of \$129 million and anticipated deficits reaching \$280 million over the next two years. The city's structural deficit may stem from historical budget priorities and decisions. Although current budget proposals aim to mitigate immediate financial issues, Oakland is projected to face a deficit of \$130 million in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Measure T, endorsed by Oakland residents, was designed to address the structural budget deficit. Representatives from Oakland's firefighters' union have expressed concerns that further reductions to their department could adversely affect response times.

14. Please discuss any specific improvements you expect to make during your 4-year term related to:

a. Blight, litter and dumping

Community outreach and education programs are effective in reducing litter and engaging residents. Ordinances can be enacted to emphasize the importance of proper trash management. Within the Municipality of Oakland, regulations for trash disposal can be established, and fines or community service can be issued for violations such as improper trash storage, using public bins for household trash, and littering.

b. Road repair & repaving

Providing Oakland with safe, well-maintained streets is fundamental to the local transportation network of every neighborhood. Safe roadways prevent accidents for all modes of travel, including buses, bicycles, pedestrians,

wheelchairs, strollers, and cars. When repaving Oakland's streets, there is an opportunity to enhance newly resurfaced streets with designs that accommodate a wider range of users and adhere to higher standards of safety and accessibility.

c. Bike/pedestrian safety and public transportation

Investing in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure during my leadership as Oakland Mayor can enhance mobility and facilitates access to public transportation. The collaborative design and implementation of pedestrian safety programs can improve safety while supporting individuals walking to school. Creating bikeable and walkable cities increases safety, improves quality of life, and contributes to reducing the environmental footprint.

Evaluating safe bicycle and pedestrian access to bus stops and transit stations is essential to ensure safety. Additionally, wearing helmets while riding bicycles, e-bikes, or motorcycles can significantly prevent injuries and fatalities resulting from crashes.

d. Streetscape improvements (trees, parklets, etc)

As mayor, I will revitalize Oakland's Tree Planting Permit Application process. Interested parties will be required to select a species from Oakland's Approved Species List, adhere to the Tree Planting Guidelines in their entirety for the tree to be recognized as an official city tree, and submit the Tree Planting Permit online, via mail, email, or fax. Additionally, I will continue the Parklet Program through applications to convert on-street parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. The primary objective is to enhance the vibrancy of Oakland at restaurants, businesses, and community-based organizations.

e. Stormwater management

The urban City of Oakland can address stormwater runoff by implementing sustainable infrastructure and planning. Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) help manage urban development impacts by retaining significant amounts of stormwater runoff and treating it to remove pollutants. Green infrastructure can mitigate stormwater runoff and sewer overflow issues by slowing down the runoff, distributing it over the land, and gradually allowing it to infiltrate the ground, or reusing the water onsite in some instances.

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

To improve Oakland's revenue, I will increase sales tax to raise up to \$20 million and replace the flat business tax with a progressive rate to support small businesses and increase city funds.

- b. How you might reduce expenses (specifying any cuts you might make)
I shall source data-driven solutions to enhance parking citation collections and cut tracking costs.
- c. How you might better manage unfunded liabilities, including pensions and deferred maintenance
The strategies I will utilize include eliminating future liability, mandating conversion from retiree health care coverage, updating accounting rules for transparent pension liability reporting, and addressing the gap between promised benefits and available assets.

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?

Challenges include cuts to the public safety ambassador program, cultural arts grants, Frank Ogawa Plaza activation, Human Services Department food program, and various city jobs in police, fire, and other areas. Previous mayors neglected these issues, focusing instead on Oakland's pro-sport teams leaving.

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?

I maintain objectivity by accepting only volunteer contributions, rather than cash donations. As a person with inside knowledge of many of these organizations, I am well-positioned to address the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. I will make informed decisions to effectively balance various pressures, topics, and concerns.

18. Given the mayor's role in proposing but not controlling the final budget, how would you build consensus around your fiscal priorities? How would you work with the City Administrator to ensure effective implementation?

I will defend my final budget proposals at every step. By collaborating with the City Administrator, I aim to achieve consensus on my fiscal priorities. Effective implementation requires clear justification and an engaged public aware of their fiscal rights.

19. 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, create more jobs, and improve the Oakland economy?

In general, prices of goods and services challenge Oakland businesses to make decent profits. Many Oakland businesses are small and concerned about the rise of the minimum wage. Theft and vandalism hurt plenty of shops, as well. To ensure that Oakland businesses can thrive, the Neighborhood Business Assistance Program via the City of Oakland's Economic & Workforce Development Department can disperse information about grants, loans, permits, and answer questions. Prepping more for the Oakland economy creates more successful business ventures. In addition, Business Watch can curtail adversity.

Governance

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

20. To what extent is the City of Oakland meeting or not meeting your definition of good government? As mayor, what changes would you make to improve government effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency in Oakland?
As mayor, I would redefine good government in Oakland to boost effective, efficient, and transparent governance. This includes enhancing public participation in meetings, streamlining City of Oakland services, and crafting decision-making processes more crystal clear.
21. More specifically, how might the city provide greater oversight and public accountability in contracting, grant-making, and outcomes/performance management?
Establish enhanced oversight, accountability, transparency, and control mechanisms for City contractors and grant recipients. Explore best practices for grant management to simplify the process while ensuring transparency and accountability. Develop and implement policies that promote a common-sense approach to governance.
22. Oakland has a unique hybrid governance structure where power is shared between the mayor, council, and city administrator. How would you provide effective executive leadership within this structure? Please give specific examples of how you would:
- a. Set and drive citywide priorities by aligning the council, staff, and community around shared priorities
Continue with the General Plan and its objectives. This includes developing a transportation system that provides safe and reliable options for all residents, fostering more liveable and walkable neighborhoods with convenient access to grocery stores, entertainment venues, retail outlets, libraries, and parks, creating parks and recreational spaces, particularly in underserved areas, to ensure everyone has access to natural environments, protecting residential areas from excessive noise pollution near freeways, airports, and industrial zones, enhancing city infrastructure such as roads, bridges, sidewalks, public restrooms, and fire stations, and identifying and addressing the diverse needs of Oakland's communities.
 - b. Build productive working relationships with city council
 - 1. Form relationships early.** Begin the council member orientation process early, even during the campaign period, and immediately after candidates are elected. This helps establish roles and build mutual trust and confidence.
 - 2. Utilize interpersonal and communication skills.** Interpersonal and communication skills significantly impact a manager's long term success, influencing the quality of relationships with elected officials and key constituents.
 - 3. Implement a system of players, roles, and rules.** Good governance occurs when the governing body, chief administrative officer, and staff understand and respect each other's roles. The chief administrator can aid elected officials in understanding their roles, which is crucial for organizational and governance success.

4. Conduct new council member orientations

Local government managers have the responsibility and opportunity to organize effective orientation programs to help new council members transition into their roles.

5. Prioritize council and board meetings.

Council and board meetings are essential for local government decision making processes. These meetings allow elected leaders to make decisions on behalf of the community.

6. Organize council retreats.

Council retreats, also known as leadership summits or annual planning sessions, are valuable for discussing and agreeing on the community's future goals. This allows the chief administrator to implement the necessary processes and procedures to achieve these goals.

- c. **Manage and empower the city administrator**
Grant practices and powers that align with the mayor's office and council's vision, including strategic planning, policy implementation, financial and personnel management, and community engagement.
- d. **Ensure accountability across departments**
Implement measures for consistency and accountability to help departments achieve goals and collaborate. Encourage relationships and teamwork to address isolated practices and promote cooperation. Utilize trackable metrics, such as blockchain, to evaluate community performance. Maintain trust between government and citizens by ensuring ethical conduct and accountability.

23. As Oakland's mayor, you would be the city's most visible leader but would need to work through others to implement many initiatives. How would you do the following (and please provide examples from your experience that demonstrate these capabilities):

- a. **Use the platform of the mayor's office to advance city priorities?**
Maximize authority by growing revenue to promote social justice and equality. Advocate at all government levels to enhance Oakland's community services. Pursue state grants and new funding opportunities. Focus on equity in policies, investing in marginalized communities. Inform the Mayor, City Council, Departments, and stakeholders to shape advocacy strategies and build coalitions. For example, I hold grant writing experience to steer and coach City of Oakland priorities.
- b. **Build and maintain coalitions to achieve your goals?**
Stay organized with clear plans, goals, and objectives. Cultivate effective communication among partners and organizations. Aim for social change while strengthening involved groups. For example, I could invite Jesse Jackson to the table to draw in popular coalition achievements.
- c. **Represent Oakland effectively in regional discussions?**
Celebrate Oakland's strengths, from the industrious Port of Oakland to its artistic forums at Fluid 510 downtown. Address the negative stereotypes of young African American men and highlight Oakland's multicultural heritage. Invite everyone to regional festivals hosted by Oakland. For instance,

leveraging my network can help create new business and employment opportunities.