



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

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.

All 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 by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .docx or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Shawn Danino

Email: shawn.danino@gmail.com

Phone Number: 818.585.1947

Office & District Sought: Oakland City Council At-Large

Campaign Website: <https://www.daninoforoakland.com>

Social Media Handles:

- Twitter: (Not Active)
- Facebook: Shawn Danino for Oakland City Council
- Instagram: daninoforoakland (most active)
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/shawndanino>
- TikTok: danino.4.oakland (second most active)

Expected total Fundraising Amount: \$100,000+

Funds Raised To Date: \$9,000+ (major fundraising push just beginning)

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

I am a progressive community organizer, policy writer, and civil servant with over a decade of experience and love for the City of Oakland. I hold a Master of Science in Information and a Master of Public Policy from the University of Michigan, as well as a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Southern California. My academic background equips me with the knowledge and skills to tackle complex policy challenges and advocate for evidence-based solutions.



I spent the last five years at the State Housing Department (California Department of Housing and Community Development) and was the sole reviewer for Oakland's 8-year housing plan, which would accommodate 28,000 new housing units. As a founding member of the State ADU Team and Prohousing Team, I have played a key role in pioneering new housing solutions that benefit Oakland's working families. My efforts have led to the establishment of a \$100 million annual grant program to finance affordable backyard homes in North Oakland, providing much-needed housing options for the city's residents. I also served as the primary reviewer for Oakland's Housing Element and Prohousing Designation Program. My leadership helped secure \$3 million through the Prohousing Incentive Program, furthering the city's commitment to equitable housing development.

I am running for Oakland City Council to build a city that works for everyone. I envision an Oakland where unions are strong, housing is affordable, and every resident has the opportunity to succeed.

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

I have been in the East Bay on and off for over ten years and have never felt more at home in a place. Like many Oakland residents, I have experienced deep housing insecurity, displacement, and the experience of getting priced out of communities I love. Overwhelmingly, Oakland needs housing abundance and a variety of housing options available across the income spectrum. We are in desperate need of permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and naturally occurring affordable housing. I am proud to be the most pro-housing candidate in the race with a long track record of fighting for the desegregation and construction of affordable housing across the state and country. This city has a rich history of activism and community based social welfare programs. I am confident that we can build upon Oakland's existing legacy and make safe, affordable housing a right for every resident.

In Oakland, we hear a lot about public safety. Especially from politicians. We rarely talk about what public safety really means. In addition to safe affordable housing, public safety is mobility, walkability, and access to job opportunities. Public safety means lowering the cost of living so that people feel less pressured to resort to crime in order to survive. I am putting mobility and safety at the center of my campaign. I have a proven track record of advocating for bikes, transit, pedestrians, wheelchair users and other folks who need to move safely through their City.

I am a Board Member at Transport Oakland and TransForm, two non profits deeply committed to bicycle and pedestrian safety. In my work at the state housing Department, I reviewed 40 cities 8-year housing plans and pushed for active mobility programs that



separate bike lanes from dangerous car traffic, create Bus Rapid Transit routes, and open more neighborhood markets to encourage more walkability. Oakland has a rich history of progressive policies and social activism. I'm proud to be part of and represent a city that is continually working toward bettering itself and the communities that comprise it.

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 am a dedicated public servant, a dues-paying union member, and a housing expert with a proven track record of passing laws supporting working families. I have lived in the Bay Area on and off for over ten years, and I've never felt more at home in a place. As a disabled person who has personally struggled with housing costs in the Bay, I have dedicated my career to making our cities healthy and affordable. I worked at the State Housing Department and collaborated with Oakland City staff to approve an 8-year housing plan, while spearheading a \$100 million fund to build affordable backyard homes. I earned two Master's in Public Policy and Information and serve on two non-profit boards where I advocate for safe streets. I will move swiftly in the first 100 days to address climate change, the cost of childcare, and propose a zero displacement housing program, a 4-day work week, a neighborhood market plan, and a reliable transit system that make Oakland safe and welcoming.

I have written laws at the state and local level, I have the experience and expertise to draft good evidence based policies that address the needs of the City. I am running for Oakland City Council to build a city that works for everyone. I envision an Oakland where unions are strong, housing is affordable, and every resident has the opportunity to succeed.

4. Prior to running for office, how were you involved in local government and/or your community? What were your biggest accomplishments?

With extensive experience at the California Department of Housing and Community Development, I have been a driving force behind planning for approximately 250,000 housing units across California. My dedication and expertise have been recognized through 8 peer recognition awards via the RISE and Director's Award Nomination Program. My collaboration with the State Treasurer led to the establishment of a \$100 million recurring annual grant program, financing affordable backyard homes in North Oakland. As a founding member of both the State ADU Team and Prohousing Team, I mentored over 10 staff members on housing feasibility, zoning, climate resilience planning, and creating tools for persons with disabilities. In Oakland, I served as the Primary Reviewer for the city's Housing Element, ensuring plans to accommodate nearly 28,000 housing units over eight years. I was also the Primary Reviewer for Oakland's successful Prohousing Designation Program Application, securing \$3 million through the Prohousing Incentive Program. My advocacy has been instrumental in the approval of a



222-unit mixed-income project near West Oakland BART, with special environmental justice concessions for lower-income households. I worked with progressive partners like East Bay for Everyone to desegregate and rezone the Rockridge area for thousands of additional homes in an area with a history of excluding communities of color. I have completed two fellowships, one with Blue State Digital and the other with the Urban Land Institute where I designed the Zero Displacement Housing Program.

In addition to my professional work, I have also served as an organizer with the Sunrise Movement and a champion for the Green New Deal. I have fought for climate justice policies that create good-paying, unionized jobs while addressing the urgent need for environmental sustainability. Through my advocacy, I hope to ensure that the voices of working people are heard in the fight against climate change. I am also a Board Member at TransForm and Transport Oakland, two groups that center safety and mobility on streets and provide opportunities for affordable ways to move about our neighborhoods.

Oakland City Council

5. **What specific and measurable improvements in public safety will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? Please describe how you plan to deliver these public safety improvements.** As part of your response, please:

- a. Summarize what existing public safety investments you might increase, reduce or eliminate to ensure adequate resources for you to meet your goal.

Housing affordability and homelessness is one of the most pressing public safety issues in Oakland. I have helped shape successful policies and plans for construction of affordable housing at the state and local level, so I know what it will take to see measurable impact within a 2 year time frame. My keystone program is a zero displacement housing program: a program that has been vetted extensively by homebuilders and housing economists. The structure will allow owners of detached single family homes to trade in their homes for ownership two new missing middle homes on a redesigned lot with eight to ten new stacked townhomes (or other similar products), with the other homes being made available to new and old Oaklanders. This policy will allow us to grow inclusively while not displacing the communities of color that have shaped Oakland's identity for decades. I plan to coordinate extensively with land trusts, non-profit housing developers, and other partners to implement similar programs for renters. I will also implement and amplify existing tenant preference programs that will allow residents who were previously displaced by economic pressures, urban renewal and highway construction, to return to Oakland. I believe that housing is a human right, a form of healthcare, and a key form of reparative justice. I also know that reenvisioning our relationship with housing is a public safety necessity and will implement these policies with the urgency they deserve.



I plan to put mobility and safety at the center of this campaign. I have a proven track record of advocating for bikes, transit, pedestrians, wheelchair users and other folks who need to move safely through their City. Within 4 years, I hope to improve the quality of roads, increase access to public restrooms, and legalize neighborhood markets to make Oakland a safer place to live without compromising our values as a community by criminalizing poverty. Specific actions I plan to take within a 4 year timeframe include; advocating for multi-jurisdiction road redesigns to target high injury corridors including International Boulevard, Alcatraz, and San Pablo. Adding speed bumps at freeway onramps and offramps to keep pedestrians safe, in response to a bicycle killing at the entrance of I-580. Legalizing the neighborhood market, also known as an Accessory Commercial use, to improve walkability and reduce the need to get into a car to meet all daily needs. Car infrastructure and ownership is costly for both the city and its residents. By investing in our infrastructure and implementing policies aimed at improving roads and making transit safer, we can in turn make Oakland more affordable for residents.

b. Discuss your perspectives on:

- i. The effectiveness of Oakland's non-sworn responses to public safety issues. Which ones (if any) are successful and should be continued? Which ones (if any) are not successful and should be discontinued?

Oakland has made significant progress in investing in task groups and programs aimed at reimagining and improving public safety in our communities. Whenever possible, I believe we should add enforcement of laws that do not require additional armed police officers, such as community policing, red-light cameras that enforce pedestrian right of way violations, and expanded mental health and substance abuse resources for residents in need. For example, a 2021 community vote (Reimagining Public Safety) found that a majority of voters were in favor of creating a civilian Community Ambassadors program to respond to nonviolent, non-mental health incidents. Policies like these which are resident centered, and rooted in evidence based practices should be championed and embraced by lawmakers. We should avoid making significant investments into less effective punitive enforcement.

In my discussions with law enforcement and aligned group, there is also an appreciation that many jobs performed by police officers are better off automated or sourced out. For example, pedestrian right of way violations and noise violations for particularly loud vehicles have been completed with significant support of automation. It is also important to retain the trust of Oaklanders by having the right guardrails on metadata and data



sharing for these crimes while also recognizing the harmful impacts that jail can have on individuals.

- ii. The appropriate staffing level of sworn police officers for the city of Oakland (provide a specific number of officers you would like to see in place by December 2028).

The number of necessary sworn officers will change over time depending on the city's needs. Overall, investment in unarmed non-violent responses and intervention programs present the best opportunity for us to organically reduce crime and the need for additional sworn officers. In the short term, we must address the fact that Oakland has a below average number of police officers. In California today, the average city has about 1.9 officers per 1000 residents. Oakland only has 1.65 despite having higher than average rates of crime. For this reason, I am in favor of increasing support for police staff to a size commensurate with the population. Increasing the number of sworn officers to around 800 would bring Oakland more in line with other cities in the state. As previously mentioned, there are also several roles that armed police officers do not necessarily need to be filling; and those roles in the enforcement of laws should be sourced elsewhere.

To control the costs of increased staffing, we should be mindful of overtime expenses among officers. Police officers in Oakland typically make more on average than officers in other jurisdictions, largely due to higher rates of overtime. Increasing the sworn officer count could potentially pay for itself through reduced overtime rates and increased tax revenue associated with a safer city. Automating certain processes, such as traffic enforcement, can also achieve the goal of increasing pedestrian safety without added police presence. Ultimately, the city council must maintain oversight over the police department and thus should have discretion over the number of sworn officers. There should only be as many officers as the council has voted to allow, and increasing the number of officers must require a majority vote.

- iii. Your prioritized strategies for addressing various types of crime, including gun violence, retail robbery, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others.

A majority of Oakland residents are in favor of enforcing laws in ways that may not always require sworn police officers to respond. Ways that we can increase safety in our city without increasing police presence include



increasing the number of eyes and people on the street by promoting housing density, mixed use housing, and pedestrian safety. Investing in public transit infrastructure, spaces like public libraries, and policies aimed at reducing poverty in our community will help drive these priorities as well. My strategies for addressing these issues are rooted in prevention rather than intervention, by making our communities more affordable, walkable, and liveable we will also make them safer.

- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

I am a Board Member at Transport Oakland and TransForm, two non profits deeply committed to bicycle and pedestrian safety. In my work at the state housing Department, I reviewed 40 cities' 8-year housing plans and pushed for active mobility programs that separate bike lanes from dangerous car traffic, create Bus Rapid Transit routes, and open more neighborhood markets to encourage more walkability. I also got a 'menu item' added to the State's Prohousing Designation program that rewards Cities for separating bike lanes and advancing Vision Zero. I have the research skills and experience necessary to implement best practices. By connecting issues of urban planning and land use to public safety, we can create a safer Oakland for everyone.

6. **What specific and measurable improvements in Oakland's homelessness and housing affordability crisis will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these homelessness and housing affordability wins for Oakland?** As part of your response, please:

- a. Describe the biggest problems our city faces that keep us from solving the housing crisis.
- b. Summarize what homelessness/housing investments you might advance, reduce, or eliminate to ensure adequate resources are available to meet the goals you stated above. What trade-offs might need to be considered in distributing resources between different solutions?
- c. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. The respective roles of affordable (below-market-rate) housing and market-rate housing
 - ii. The City's Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms
 - iii. Oakland's Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward
 - iv. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment



- d. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

I am proud to be the most pro-housing candidate in the race for City Council. I have a long track record of fighting for the desegregation and construction of affordable housing across the state and country. I believe that housing is a human right, a form of healthcare, and a key form of reparative justice. Since 1988, the city of Oakland has funded the development of only about 6000 units of housing. Reenvisioning our relationship with housing is a climate change, public health, and safety necessity. I will implement these policies with the urgency they deserve. I have dedicated my career to making our cities healthy and affordable. I worked at the State Housing Department and collaborated with Oakland City staff to approve an 8-year housing plan, while spearheading a \$100 million fund to build affordable backyard homes.

The City has seen more housing production in the last decade than many other jurisdictions in California. However, the City is not acting with the urgency that is necessary to accelerate housing production and make our city affordable for the people who live and work here. My keystone program is a zero displacement housing program: a program that has been vetted extensively by homebuilders and housing economists. The structure will allow owners of detached single family homes to trade in their homes for ownership two new missing middle homes on a redesigned lot with eight to ten new stacked townhomes (or other similar products), with the other homes being made available to new and old Oaklanders. This policy will allow us to grow inclusively while not displacing the communities of color that have shaped Oakland's identity for decades. Working with the City of Oakland and the Oakland Housing Authority, I plan to coordinate extensively with land trusts, non-profit housing developers, and other partners to implement similar programs for renters. I will also implement and amplify tenant preference programs that will allow residents who were previously displaced by economic pressures, urban renewal and highway construction, to return to Oakland.

I recognize the foundational ways that housing intersects with our transportation system and our built environment, and will be a tireless advocate for programs that make housing and transportation significantly more affordable and sustainable. My pro housing policies will build upon those already in existence at the City of Oakland and Oakland Housing Authority.

7. **What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver with respect to Oakland's public infrastructure in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these improvements?** As part of your response, please:
- a. Summarize the biggest problem(s) Oakland faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable).
 - b. Discuss any specific improvements you expect to make during your 4-year term related to:
 - i. Blight, Litter and Dumping
 - ii. Road repair & repaving



1. Streamline the contracting of this work, while also recognizing where we need to narrow the right of way, add greenspaces, and rewilding programs.
 - iii. Bike/pedestrian safety and public transportation
 - iv. Streetscape improvements (trees, parklets, etc)
 - v. Stormwater management
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals.

I am proud to put mobility and safety at the center of this campaign. I have a proven track record of advocating for bikes, transit, pedestrians, wheelchair users and other folks who need to move safely through their City. I am a Board Member at Transport Oakland and TransForm, two non profits deeply committed to bicycle and pedestrian safety. In my work at the state housing Department, I reviewed 40 cities 8-year housing plans and pushed for active mobility programs that separate bike lanes from dangerous car traffic, create Bus Rapid Transit routes, and open more neighborhood markets to encourage more walkability. I also got a 'menu item' added to the State's Prohousing Designation program that rewards Cities for separating bike lanes and advancing Vision Zero. Within 2 years, I hope to take the following actions:

Advocating for multi-jurisdiction road redesigns to target high injury corridors including International Boulevard, Alcatraz, and San Pablo.

Adding speed bumps at freeway onramps and offramps to keep pedestrians safe, in response to a bicycle killing at the entrance of I-580.

Engaging with partners writing the Fire Code at CalFire and the Oakland Fire Department to ensure streets can accommodate emergency responders while also keeping pedestrians safe.

Within 4 years, I hope to legalize the neighborhood market, also known as an Accessory Commercial use, to improve walkability and reduce the need to get into a car to meet all daily needs. I also plan to target billions of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) dollars towards Active Mobility improvement plans, including protected bike lanes, bumpouts, and other traffic calming measures. Finally, I hope to target additional capital spends towards greenways and pursue a pilot program with food truck clusters along greenways. This will support local businesses, reduce the entry cost to starting a business in Oakland, and provide people opportunities to connect without needing to drive. Tree canopy and green spaces are an important environmental justice issue, and I hope to expand access to these spaces during my term. There should be equitable access across the City, for all residents.

I recognize how important bikes, scooters, and walkable Cities are to addressing the worst effects of climate change. I also advocate for these things because car ownership is expensive, and we want Oaklanders to be able to save more money. I will be the best ally for bikes, pedestrians and transit users that Oakland can have.



8. **Please describe how you plan to address Oakland's immediate fiscal budget crisis AND long-term structural budget deficit. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver in 2 years? 4 years?** As part of your response, please:
- a. Summarize the largest contributors to Oakland's budget challenges and your understanding of why previous Councils/Mayoral administrations have not solved the issue(s).
 - b. Describe how you will reduce expenses (including cuts you would make to specific programs) that will free up resources that can be allocated toward addressing other budget priorities.
 - c. Describe how you will increase revenues to fund much-needed services, avoid painful cuts, invest in the city's future growth, and address the structural deficit.
 - d. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. Major sources of general fund revenues, and any recent trends or changes
 - ii. Major general fund expenditures, and any recent trends or changes
 - iii. Unfunded liabilities, including pensions and deferred maintenance, and any recent trends or changes
 - e. Describe how you will maintain objectivity despite pressure and specific budget asks by the groups and organizations that have endorsed you.
 - f. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

I believe that public sector budgets should be human centric, focusing on the health and needs of our residents, not special interests or big businesses. By prioritizing housing, small businesses, and efficient land use we can create an effective, sustainable budget that works for everyone- at every level of income.

By prioritizing new development, we can maximize tax revenue in addition to increasing the supply of new affordable housing. New developments provide upfront funds by paying fees, and additional ongoing revenue in the form of annual taxes paid to the city.

By using our land efficiently, we can plan for significantly more mixed income housing, to put downward pricing pressure on rents, while also collecting important tax revenue. Dense, mixed income housing is very beneficial to the budget. By shifting away from big box retailers and large commercial buildings and instead focusing on local businesses, we can use our public resources wisely and promote the long term success of our residents. In the first 90 days, I will draft legislation that will study commercial zoning standards and requirements, to address the constant challenges of operating ground-floor commercial above residential buildings. If the evidence supports, I will reduce minimum square-footage requirements and allow more small businesses to



operate sustainably. In addition, these policies will work in line with other advancements of Vision Zero, that will make our roadways more pleasant to walk, bike and roll a wheelchair on and encourage Oaklanders to stay local and buy local. I also support passing rules that facilitate commercial to residential conversions, especially in the downtown area. On Day 1, I will introduce an ordinance to legalize neighborhood markets, including sundries, food, and coffeeshops, modeled after similar ordinances reviewed in Eureka and Berkeley. We need to prioritize the re-emergence of the neighborhood market, and make Oakland a desirable place to live, work, and run a business.

9. **Please describe what you plan to do differently from business-as-usual in city hall to ensure effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable governance in Oakland.**

As part of your response, please:

- a. Describe in what ways the City of Oakland is meeting and/or not meeting your definition of good government.
- b. Summarize what changes you would make in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of city governance and increase transparency.
- c. Answer how Oakland City Council can provide greater oversight and public accountability in contracting, grant-making, and outcomes/performance management.

The City of Oakland has a rich history of activism, social justice, and progressive governance. One of the best ways we can increase government transparency and accountability is by looking to other cities in the bay area for examples of social policies that work. As a member of the city council, I don't plan to reinvent the wheel. The City of Berkeley's neighborhood market ordinance and Alameda's four day work week template are both fantastic examples of legislation that has great potential for Oakland. City Council can provide additional public accountability by limiting the role of consultants in government work, as they are typically very costly and not always necessary.

10. **For incumbents:** What is a vote you're MOST and LEAST proud of in the last four years. Briefly describe the issue, why you voted the way you did, and what you think now about that vote.

N/A

11. **For new candidates:** What was the most impactful Council vote in the past four years? Briefly describe the issue, what you think of the Council's decision, and what you would have done had you been on the Council.



Among the most impactful decisions to come before the council has been the plan to rezone Rockridge last October. I am proud to say I worked alongside East Bay For Everyone to end a legacy of exclusionary zoning in Oakland. The zoning amendments will allow for taller housing projects along corridors like College and Claremont Avenue, higher density and greater height limits for low-income housing across Oakland, and streamlined approval of missing middle housing types. This decision benefits all of Oakland and I would have proudly voted in favor of rezoning.

12. 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?

In order to support small businesses in Oakland and grow the local economy, we need to make it easier to own and operate a business in the city. Right now, the cost of opening a small store, be it a restaurant or a coffeeshop, is far too high. In addition, the cost of maintaining this business is far too high. It often puts the pressure on restaurants to be unsustainable: open for way more days and hours than they would want because they have to pay their rent. On Day 1, I will introduce an ordinance to legalize neighborhood markets, including sundries, food, and coffeeshops, modeled after similar ordinances reviewed in Eureka and Berkeley. We need to prioritize the re-emergence of the neighborhood market. As a sister policy to the one described above, I will in the first 90 days, draft legislation that will study commercial zoning standards and requirements, to address the constant challenges of operating ground-floor commercial above residential buildings. If the evidence supports, I will reduce minimum square-footage requirements and allow more small businesses to operate sustainably. In addition, these policies will work in line with other advancements of Vision Zero, that will make our roadways more pleasant to walk, bike and roll a wheelchair on and encourage Oaklanders to stay local and buy local.

13. There are important ballot measures that are up for vote in November. How would you vote on the following and why?

- a. Would you vote to Recall District Attorney Pamela Price? (YES/NO)
- b. Would you vote to Recall Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao? (YES/NO)
- c. Would you vote to pass the Oakland Measure Z renewal? (YES/NO) - Open to learning and unlearning, but it is important for everyone in Oakland to have a livable wage. We can also do this by driving down the cost of living by making housing, food, and transportation more affordable, by, for example, expanding mobility lanes, bus routes, and alternatives to expensive single occupancy vehicles.



- d. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)?
(YES/NO) - Focus more on rehabilitation and restorative justice, but open to learning and unlearning on this issue.