



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: Meron Samedar

Email: meron.samedar@gmail.com

Phone Number: 209-627-9809

Office & District Sought: City Council District 3

Campaign Website: <https://meronsemedar.org/>

Social Media Handles

- Twitter: Meron Samedar
- Facebook: Meron Samedar
- Instagram: Meron Samedar
- LinkedIn: Meron Samedar
- TikTok: Meron Samedar

Expected total Fundraising Amount:

Funds Raised To Date: \$1700

Below is my campaign policy

[What Does Meron Samedar Stand For?](#)

[District 3 is my community, and I live its challenges and benefits with you every day. We need to build a collective vision for Oakland’s future, taking grassroots input from everyone who cares through periodic neighborhood discussions.](#)

[Like you, I know the key to reviving Oakland and improving our quality of life lies in strengthening our community. Working together, we can:](#)



- Make Oakland safer by hiring more emergency responders - not just more police, but also specialists to address mental health, homelessness, and other emergencies.
- Address root causes through policies and spending priorities that tackle the underlying reasons for crime, homelessness, unemployment, drug abuse and other issues.
- Demand accountability for how our tax dollars are spent.
- Build a safer, cleaner and more affordable Oakland by better exploiting state and federal funds and expertise.
- Generate revenue by protecting and incentivizing small businesses.
- Create a better future by supporting organizations that serve families and provide opportunities to our youth for a productive life.

And we can build a better Oakland by ensuring that our City Council members are accessible and responsive to the voters. I will always be available by phone or text (510-779-4738).

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?
 - I'm the Executive Director of a non profit called Mentor a Newcomer (<https://mentornewcomer.org/>) that assist oakland underserved communities.
2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?
 - Safety and Housing
3. Why are you running for office and why are you uniquely qualified to fulfill the office you are running for at this time?

District 3 is my community, and I live its challenges and benefits with you every day. We need to build a collective vision for Oakland's future, taking grassroots input from everyone who cares through periodic neighborhood discussions.

Like you, I know the key to reviving Oakland and improving our quality of life lies in strengthening our community.

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



-Through Mentor a Newcomer, I have worked to better the lives of our youth, families and elderly every day. Working as a community organizer has been the most fulfilling experience of my life.

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.
- 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?
 - 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).
 - iii. Your prioritized strategies for addressing various types of crime, including gun violence, retail robbery, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others.
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?

- [Make Oakland safer by hiring more emergency responders - not just more police, but also specialists to address mental health, homelessness, and other emergencies.](#)
- [Address root causes through policies and spending priorities that tackle the underlying reasons for crime, homelessness, unemployment, drug abuse and other issues.](#)

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?

· Build a safer, cleaner and more affordable Oakland by better exploiting state and federal funds and expertise.

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
 - 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?

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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?
- Demand accountability for how our tax dollars are spent.
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.
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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.



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.

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?**

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)
 - d. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)? (YES/NO)