



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: Marcie Hodge

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Office & District Sought: City Council D7

Campaign Website: www.hodge4oakland.com

Social Media Handles

- Twitter:
- Facebook:
- Instagram: mlhodge1
- LinkedIn:
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: 15k

Funds Raised To Date: 0

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?

My background is deeply rooted in Oakland, where I have served as a Peralta Community College District Trustee for 2 terms, advocating for educational opportunities and community development. In this role, I worked to improve access to quality education and support for students across the district. My experience also includes extensive involvement in local community initiatives, where I have focused on neighborhood revitalization, tackling issues like crime and blight, and working collaboratively to improve the quality of life for all Oakland residents. My commitment to Oakland is demonstrated by my years of service and dedication to creating positive change in our community.



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

Two of the top challenges facing Oakland today are the rise in crime and the lack of affordable housing, both of which significantly impact the safety and stability of our communities. These issues require urgent attention and collaborative efforts to develop effective solutions.

Despite these challenges, Oakland's bright spots include its rich cultural diversity and strong sense of community. The city is home to a vibrant arts scene, innovative local businesses, and passionate residents who are deeply engaged in social justice and activism.

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 I believe Oakland needs proactive leadership to address the pressing issues facing our community, from rising crime to housing affordability. As someone deeply committed to this city, I've spent years working to improve the quality of life for all residents through my roles in public service and community advocacy.

What makes me uniquely qualified for this office is my extensive experience as a Peralta Community College District Trustee and my deep understanding of the challenges our neighborhoods face. I have a proven track record of getting things done, and I'm ready to bring that same dedication to the City Council, where I will work tirelessly to create a safer, more equitable, and vibrant Oakland for everyone.

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

I'm running for office because I believe Oakland needs proactive leadership to tackle the pressing issues we face, from rising crime to housing affordability. Having been in business in Oakland for over 15 years, I've seen firsthand the challenges and opportunities that our community encounters daily. My deep commitment to this city has driven me to work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for all residents through public service and community advocacy. What makes me uniquely qualified for this office is my extensive experience as a Peralta Community College District Trustee and my deep understanding of our neighborhoods' needs. I have a proven track record of achieving results, and I'm ready to bring that same dedication to the City Council, where I will work to create a safer, more equitable, and vibrant Oakland for everyone.



One of my biggest accomplishments was serving as a Peralta Community College District Trustee, where I successfully advocated for improved educational resources and student support programs. Additionally, my experience running a business in Oakland for over 15 years has allowed me to contribute to the local economy, create jobs, and support community development. These achievements reflect my dedication to making a lasting impact in Oakland through both public service and entrepreneurship.

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. **To meet public safety goals, I would increase investments in community policing, violence prevention programs, and mental health crisis response teams, which have proven effective in reducing crime and improving community trust. I would consider reducing or eliminating* funding for programs that have shown limited impact on crime reduction, such as certain high-cost surveillance technologies, in favor of approaches that focus on community-based solutions and preventative measures. This reallocation of resources would ensure that we prioritize strategies that address the root causes of crime and enhance overall public safety.**
- 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?

Programs like MACRO have been successful in providing non-sworn responses to mental health crises and consideration should be assessed for expansion. However, I will review the effectiveness of other non-sworn initiatives to ensure they meet the objectives.

- 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).



By December 2028, I aim to have 800 sworn officers, as outlined in the City Charter, to ensure adequate coverage and timely responses to emergencies.

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

Prioritized strategies include targeted enforcement against gun violence, enhanced security measures for retail areas, increased community patrols to prevent burglaries, and stronger traffic law enforcement to reduce traffic violence.

Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals? **As a Peralta Trustee, I successfully managed complex budgets and delivered measurable improvements in student safety and support. My 15 years in business have equipped me with the practical experience needed to implement effective public safety strategies in Oakland.**

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. **The biggest problems Oakland faces in solving the housing crisis include the high cost of land, restrictive zoning regulations, and limited funding for affordable housing. These factors make it difficult to build the necessary housing at a pace that meets demand. Additionally, the lengthy permitting process and community opposition to new developments further delay projects. These challenges combine to create significant barriers to addressing the city's housing needs effectively.**

In 2 years, I will work to reduce homelessness by 15% through expanding supportive housing and rapid rehousing programs. In 4 years, I aim to increase the supply of affordable housing by 20% by streamlining the permitting process and incentivizing the development of below-market-rate units, as outlined in the General Plan's Housing Element.

- 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?

I will advance investments in affordable housing projects and supportive services, while reducing spending on less effective temporary shelters. Trade-offs may include reallocating resources from high-cost market-rate developments to fund affordable housing and wraparound services that address root causes of homelessness.

c. Discuss your perspectives on:

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

Both affordable and market-rate housing are essential. Prioritizing below-market-rate housing is crucial to ensuring that all Oakland residents have access to stable housing, especially those most vulnerable.

ii. The City's Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms
I support the Housing Element's goals to increase density and promote mixed-use developments, which are necessary to meet state-mandated housing targets and to create more inclusive neighborhoods.

iii. Oakland's Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward
Oakland's Encampment Management Policy has been inconsistently implemented, leading to uneven access to services and criticisms over fairness. Moving forward, the policy needs to ensure consistent support for unhoused individuals, prioritize humane treatment, and provide clear alternatives before any displacement occurs. Improved coordination between city departments and community organizations is essential for success.

iv. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment
The current approach requires better coordination between the City and County, with increased funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs that can prevent homelessness and support recovery.

Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals? **As a Peralta Trustee, I successfully managed budgets and implemented programs that supported vulnerable student populations. My 15 years in business have provided me with practical experience in navigating complex regulatory environments, which will be crucial in advancing housing initiatives in Oakland.**



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?**

In 2 years, I'll prioritize repairing 50% of Oakland's most damaged streets and sidewalks. In 4 years, I'll reduce the maintenance backlog by 75% and boost green infrastructure projects by 30%. This will be achieved through securing grants, streamlining approvals, and collaborating with local contractors.

- v. As part of your response, please:

Summarize the biggest problem(s) Oakland faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable). **Oakland faces several pressing issues that need urgent attention. Key among them are blight, litter, and illegal dumping, which degrade the quality of life and contribute to a sense of neglect in our communities. Additionally, road repair and maintenance have long been neglected, with many streets in disrepair posing safety hazards. Bike and pedestrian safety remain concerns as we strive to create a more inclusive and accessible city. Streetscape improvements are necessary to enhance the city's aesthetic appeal and livability, and effective stormwater management is crucial to address flooding and environmental impacts.**

To address these challenges, we must prioritize comprehensive, data-driven strategies and collaborate with community stakeholders to ensure that solutions are effective and sustainable. Trade-offs might include balancing short-term fixes with long-term investments and addressing immediate needs while planning for future growth.

- a. 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
1. **Action Plan: Implement a citywide cleanup initiative that targets high-need areas for regular maintenance and graffiti removal. Increase the frequency of trash collection and provide more accessible disposal options to discourage illegal dumping.**

Trade-offs: This approach may require reallocating funds from other areas or increasing the city budget for sanitation services.

Expected Improvements: Cleaner streets, reduced blight, and a stronger sense of community pride. Enhanced enforcement and education campaigns can also help mitigate future issues.
 2. **Develop a prioritized road repair program based on traffic patterns and the condition of existing infrastructure. Utilize the city's road maintenance plan to address the most critical areas first, and explore funding options through state and federal grants.**

Trade-offs: There may be temporary disruptions during construction, but these are necessary for long-term improvements. **Expected Improvements:** Safer roads, reduced vehicle damage, and improved traffic flow, contributing to overall community safety and satisfaction.
 3. **Action Plan: Invest in dedicated bike lanes and pedestrian pathways, enhancing connectivity between neighborhoods and key destinations. Support public transportation by advocating for increased funding and service expansions to cover underserved areas. Trade-offs: Infrastructure improvements may require significant upfront costs and adjustments in city planning.**

Expected Improvements: Increased safety for cyclists and pedestrians, more efficient public transit, and a reduction in traffic congestion.
 4. **Action Plan: Launch a streetscape enhancement program that includes planting more trees, creating parklets, and improving public spaces. Partner with local businesses and organizations to fund and maintain these projects. Trade-offs: Maintenance costs and potential disruptions during installation need to be managed effectively. Expected**



Improvements: Enhanced urban aesthetics, increased green spaces, and a more inviting environment for residents and visitors.

5. Action Plan: Implement green infrastructure solutions such as permeable pavements and rain gardens to manage stormwater effectively. Upgrade the city's stormwater infrastructure to handle heavy rainfall and prevent flooding. Trade-offs: Initial investment costs and potential redesign of existing infrastructure. Expected Improvements: Reduced flooding, improved water quality, and a more resilient city infrastructure.

Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals? **As a Peralta Trustee, I successfully managed complex budgets and delivered measurable improvements in student safety and support. My 15 years in business have equipped me with the practical experience needed to implement effective public safety strategies in Oakland.**

As a City Council candidate for District 7, my goal is to address these issues with practical, sustainable solutions that enhance our community's quality of life while being mindful of budget constraints and long-term impacts. By focusing on these key areas, we can build a stronger, more vibrant Oakland for all residents.

- vi. **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). **Oakland's budget challenges are driven by several key factors, including declining revenues, rising expenditures, and significant unfunded liabilities. Declining revenues from sales and property taxes, exacerbated by economic fluctuations and a volatile housing market, have reduced the city's financial resources. At the same time, rising expenditures in public safety, social services, and infrastructure maintenance have consistently outpaced revenue growth. Additionally, large unfunded liabilities, particularly related to pensions and deferred maintenance on city facilities, have created long-term financial burdens that strain the city's budget.**

Previous Councils and Mayoral administrations have struggled to resolve these issues due to a combination of factors. Many efforts have focused on short-term solutions rather than long-term financial planning, leading to temporary fixes that fail to address underlying problems. The city's reliance on volatile revenue sources without adequate diversification has made it difficult to maintain a stable budget. Political constraints and competing interests have often led to compromises that do not effectively tackle the root causes of the budget challenges. Furthermore, the complexity and scale of unfunded liabilities have made it challenging to implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

- 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.

To reduce expenses, I will push to streamline city operations by consolidating administrative functions and cutting underperforming or redundant programs. This includes eliminating duplicative services and renegotiating contracts to reduce overhead costs. By focusing on these efficiency improvements, we can free up resources for critical needs like public safety,



infrastructure, and economic development. This targeted approach will address immediate budget constraints and ensure funds are used effectively for essential services.

- 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.

To increase revenues, I will pursue a multi-faceted approach. First, I will enhance enforcement of existing revenue streams, such as improving compliance with business permits and expanding collection efforts for unpaid taxes. Second, I will explore new revenue sources, including impact fees on new developments and expanded public-private partnerships. Additionally, I will support initiatives to boost economic development, such as attracting new businesses and investments, which will grow the tax base and provide long-term financial stability. This approach will help avoid painful cuts, invest in the city's future, and address the structural deficit effectively.

- 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

Oakland's major sources of general fund revenues include sales tax, property tax, and business licenses. Recently, sales tax revenues have been inconsistent due to economic fluctuations and shifting consumer behaviors, while property tax revenue has seen modest growth constrained by state regulations. To stabilize revenue, diversifying sources and improving tax enforcement are essential.

Major expenditures primarily go toward public safety, public works, and social services. Public safety costs have surged, impacting overall budget flexibility, while public works and infrastructure



maintenance also demand significant funding. Additionally, unfunded liabilities related to pensions and deferred maintenance pose substantial financial challenges, requiring a strategic, long-term approach to manage these obligations effectively and ensure fiscal stability.

- e. Describe how you will maintain objectivity despite pressure and specific budget asks by the groups and organizations that have endorsed you. To maintain objectivity despite pressure from endorsed groups and organizations, I will adhere to a clear, transparent decision-making process grounded in Oakland's broader needs and fiscal priorities. I will establish and communicate clear criteria for evaluating budget requests, ensuring that all proposals are assessed based on their impact, feasibility, and alignment with the city's strategic goals. This approach will involve rigorous data analysis and stakeholder consultations to ensure fairness and objectivity.**

Additionally, I will prioritize transparency by regularly updating the public and stakeholders on budget decisions and the rationale behind them. By remaining committed to these principles, I can balance competing interests while staying focused on the city's overall well-being and long-term financial health. This will help me make informed decisions that serve the greater good of Oakland rather than yielding to specific pressures.

Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals? My extensive experience in both public service and community leadership equips me to effectively address Oakland's budget challenges and achieve our city's goals. As a former Peralta Trustee, I managed significant budgets, implemented cost-saving measures, and navigated complex financial issues while balancing stakeholder interests. This role honed my skills in fiscal oversight, strategic planning, and effective resource allocation.

Additionally, my long-standing involvement in local business and community advocacy in Oakland has provided me with a deep understanding of the city's needs and the practical solutions required. My track record of successful executive management and community engagement demonstrates my ability to deliver on ambitious goals while



maintaining transparency and accountability. These experiences collectively ensure that I can tackle Oakland's fiscal challenges and drive meaningful progress for our city.

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

Current State of Good Government: Oakland's current governance shows some commitment to transparency but often falls short in efficiency and accountability. Delays in decision-making and unclear processes can undermine public trust and effective service delivery.

Proposed Changes: I will request and inquire regular performance reviews and audits that will improve efficiency. Enhancing digital platforms for greater transparency and public access to decision-making processes will ensure clearer communication and accountability.

Greater Oversight and Accountability: The City Council can strengthen oversight by implementing stricter guidelines for contracting and grant-making, including regular audits and performance evaluations. Increasing public access to contract details and performance metrics will ensure more accountable and transparent use of public funds.

- viii. **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**
- ix. **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. **One of the most impactful Council votes was the decision on the 2021 budget, which included significant cuts to essential services amid a fiscal crisis. The Council's decision to prioritize short-term savings over long-term investments in infrastructure and social services was controversial. Had I been on the Council, I would have advocated for a balanced approach that combined immediate fiscal responsibility with strategic investments in key services, aiming to support both short-term needs and long-term city growth.**

- x. 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? Oakland businesses face significant challenges, including economic uncertainty, high operating costs, regulatory burdens, and limited access to capital. **To address these issues and foster business growth, I will implement targeted support programs such as grants and low-interest loans, streamline regulatory processes, and establish business incubators. Additionally, I will promote economic development initiatives to attract investment, create jobs, and strengthen the local business environment.**

- xi. **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) **YES**
 - b. Would you vote to Recall Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao? (YES/NO) **YES**
 - c. Would you vote to pass the Oakland Measure Z renewal? (YES/NO) **YES**
 - d. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)? (YES/NO) **YES**