

October 10, 2020

## **BNC Mayoral Forum Transcript**

### **Candidates Opening Statements**

#### **Arreguin**

Good morning, everyone. Thank you, BNC, for hosting this forum.

I love Berkeley and I've been committed to this community for the past 16 years. I served on the rent board where I fought to expand tenant protections and keep housing affordable. I served on our Zoning Commission, our Housing Commission and our planning commission where I fought to protect neighborhoods from overdevelopment, and on the city council for the past 12 years including four years as mayor, you know, I've been a leader on affordable housing, fighting climate change, economic and social justice, fiscal sustainability and improving our infrastructure. You know me. Many of you I've worked with over the years on many issues. I have the experience, I know Berkeley. I know its challenges and I am delivering on the critical challenges facing our city.

I want to read from the East Bay Times who just this morning published its editorial only endorsing ME IN THE MAYOR'S RACE.

During his first term h Arreguin has been an exceptionally hard working Mayor. Whether it's dealing with the city's finances, addressing Berkeley's mounting retirement debts or reallocating resources for police, he stands far and above other candidates with his knowledge of the issues and practical approaches to problem solving. His best funded challenger, Wayne Hsiung, an attorney and controversial animal rights activist, faces 16 felonies and eight misdemeanor charges in connection with actions at pig and turkey farms in Utah,

a goat rescue in North Carolina and two poultry farms in Petaluma, according to a report by Berkeleyside, I encourage you all to read the Berkeleyside article that came out on Wednesday.

While Hsiung and Hill wants to cut the police by 50%, Arreguin is reasonably tempered in his approach. He understands that such a large cut will be devastating to public safety, especially in areas such as West Berkeley where residents are calling for more patrols, not fewer. Check out that endorsement and look forward to the discussion today. I think we need to be true

about whom we are and why we're running and what our background is.

## **Hsiung**

I'll just briefly respond to what Jesse just said because Jesse, you know, we committed to keep this a positive campaign. I'm sorry it hasn't gone in that direction.

But you can check out our website for our response to the Berkeleyside article and we have been true to who we are. We are a grassroots movement of people fighting hard to make Berkeley a better place. Sometimes that means engaging in civil disobedience and I am proud of my record of civil disobedience over the last 15 years but let's talk about the issues, because that's what this campaign is really about.

It's about the fact that we have 2000 people experiencing homelessness in the City of Berkeley and instead of giving these folks housing and support, our cities used punitive measures like trying to enforce a vagrancy ban at BART stations, bulldozing encampments, Pushing people from one neighbor to the next and banning RV's from the city. I know a single mother and her child who are living in an encampment right now, in the Gilman because their RV was taken from them. There are more effective, evidence-based approaches to homelessness we need to deploy.

If you look at the policy differences between myself and Jesse, I think you'll find that our campaign is the one that has values in alignment with the people in Berkeley. We don't believe in punishing homeless people, we don't believe in giving corporate handouts to developers. We certainly don't believe in militarizing police and we don't believe in waiting 30 years to get to carbon neutrality. We've got to go faster.

But Jesse makes a lot of his experiences. I've got a lot of experiences too. I've been a published climate researcher. I've been an environmental attorney doing multi-million-dollar corporate financings for solar panels. I was a public housing organizer on the south side of Chicago, under the leadership of Michelle Obama at the University of Chicago and most importantly, I've been a grassroots community organizer. This is what I've done for 20 years

When you talk about things like the Berkeley Neighborhood Council that brings ordinary people together. To find the power you have in your hands to create change. This is what Berkeley needs right now. We need someone who sees the power of ordinary people. Not the power of machine politics, not the power of politics as usual, but the power and grassroots movements to change Berkeley and change the world.

## **Hill**

Thank you, everyone. My name is Aidan Hill, I use they/them pronouns. I'm currently the vice chair of the City of Berkeley's homeless Commission and

I'm a student at UC Berkeley. First, I want to say thank you for having this forum AND THANK YOU MAYOR Jesse Arreguin for your statements. I know this campaign has been very difficult, but I do see you, I see the attacks that have been thrown at you and I'm getting those attacks as well. So, you're not alone.

But the reason why I'm here is not because of my own ego or my pride to glory, but because I'm here for the Berkeley community.

I've been living in Berkeley for the last four years and in California my entire life. Since I've been alive,

I've seen numerous cataclysmic events, not only from our financial crisis back in 2008, but also the climate crisis that we're facing right now.

When I first came to Berkeley, I joined the California Public Interest Research Group. And that was quintessential to making sure our Lawmakers passed a public plastic bag ban. And when smoke from Paradise fires came and covered Berkeley I actually took my time to redirect campaign funds to disaster preparedness responses for providing mask for the South Side community.

I can assuredly say I'm the most qualified person here to speak on the issue of homelessness. Not only am I providing theoretical examples, and I have a platform for this mayoral race that includes 84 unique points.

I'm also out there in the community actively engaging with people and my most **perfected** work is protecting People's Park. Although it's a

homeless encampment, it's also a green space and that vision for a green space where our children can thrive, where we can have future generations come together is what this is all about. We're at a moment in history where the political decisions we make now, will affect us the rest of our history.

Unfortunately, many of these campaigns seem to think we need \$50,000 in order to run a successful campaign, when really, all I think is,, we need the people of Berkeley to understand who is actually there for them. And I hope I can be your mayor in the 2020 election.

### **Pete**

My name is Naomi D Pete. The only brave woman in a mayoral race with three men. I've been a resident of Berkeley since my teens and attended all Berkeley public schools.

I am a proud graduate of Berkley High. I have some college experience, majoring in business management. I ran in the Berkeley mayoral races in 1982, 1986, and 2016

There are people living all over Berkeley on our lawns and sidewalks, in tents. Crime is rising, and it has gotten too expensive to live here.

They have built housing, but it looks like no one is filling up the apartments. I am reaching out to our 122,667 residents. Let us work together to bring back honor to our city, patronize our businesses, make Berkeley clean and safe, respect one another. Find my name on the ballot and vote.

### **Questions for the Mayoral Forum**

1. **Participatory Democracy:** The work of most Boards and Commissions made up of members of the public has been displaced by Councilmember Committees that meet during daytime working hours which excludes many members of the public. Comments made by the public usually occur at a late hour in a meeting and are

usually limited to one minute. Do you agree with this system and why, and if you don't agree, how would you change it?

## Hsiung

I don't agree with the system, and I think Berkeley politics is inaccessible to many folks, including me. And this is one of the reasons I ran. If you look at how 100 years of social scientific research and the experiences and anecdotes from some of the best activists in history, people like Evan Wolfson, a leader in the gay rights movement I've talked to extensively,, change happens when ordinary people are empowered to create change.

It's not from the top down, it's from the bottom up. And this is what we saw with the Occupy Wall Street movement, this is what we saw with the civil rights movement, and this is what we saw from women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century. If we're going to confront the crises that Berkeley faces today, we absolutely need to get ordinary people involved. Berkeley politics. Many of you probably experience that this is being run like a machine. Folks who are outside of the system of the political economic elite don't get their voice heard and sometimes they get smeared if they try and create change, that's happening to me right now in this debate.

And what we're going to do in this campaign is shake that up.

In our campaign we have so many people involved in senior leadership positions, who just got involved a couple months ago, and who I frankly didn't even know. I met Mari Mendonca, a member of the Rent Board, just one year ago. Talking to her at an event for housing in Berkeley, we hit it off, and immediately, she became a senior member of our advisory board.

Just a month ago, I met a communications consultant, Matthew Hirsch who is a Berkeley resident who has been working on climate issues for the past 15 years. Now he's writing op eds for us and helping us out with communications. This is the sort of participatory culture we need if we're

going to create change in Berkeley, because, frankly, some of these crises are so big, like climate change and homelessness, we need all hands-on deck instead of attacking each other trying to bring each other down, we need to be including each other and finding ways to work together.

That is going to be one of my central focuses, we're going to change the structures and, more importantly, the culture of city government so everyone feels like they have a voice.

## **Hill**

Thank you. I've been participating in Berkeley's democratic process for the last two years, specifically. In that time, it's very important to say that sometimes I feel alone as far as the candidates here who are on the other side of the Dais.

Many times, we're pushed to have one minute to speak ad hominem about what we want and not many people feel like their opinions can be heard. And so, I don't agree with the way things are being run right now, but I'm also the only candidate here who has taken a direct hand and had experience working with people who show up at those meetings. I can recall many times when we have to go to public comments at three o'clock in the morning to give final statements because we couldn't finish our ideas earlier on. Instead, I feel like there should be a robust system.

Originally, before our corona virus pandemic I wanted to make sure that transportation to all city council meetings was possible, regardless of where you lived in the city of Berkeley. This would really require a strong public transportation network. However, because Zoom is here and we have this accessibility, it shouldn't be even more difficult to have these meetings happen.

Something I see that is fundamentally wrong, is that the time frame for our special meetings with city council, that are held behind closed doors, are going longer and longer into the night. When people like those you mentioned have families,

those who have work schedules that they have to participate in, they're not being able to actually make the decisions necessary to affect them. And I have to admit, it does seem like the City Council makes decisions primarily before any public comments are available. So as a person of

the community, as a person who is deeply invested in making sure that truth is spoken to power, I would want to make a participatory budgeting system, a Public Comment forum that includes your voices, that includes you regardless of where you are. So, if you vote for me for mayor, I'll make sure that you're included at the table.

## **Arreguin**

I've had it with the deceptions that had been put forward in this campaign. Let's cut through the BS.

Mr. Hsiung says that he is committed to run a positive campaign, you started attacking me first in August and you sent out a citywide hit piece that was full of distortions. I have been running a positive campaign.

But when people ask legitimate questions about your background and your intentions, then you say it is fake news and then you deflect.

You know, the piece that Berkeleyside put out is a very well researched independent piece. Just like Donald Trump, you don't like what it says, so now you're calling it fake news. I encourage everyone to read that piece.

You know, I care too much about the people of Berkeley to not confront this issue and to call out what is happening in this race. I have a question for Mr. Hsiung:

Did you come here to actually make Berkeley a better place, or did you come here to forge your animal rights agenda? Do you deny that you moved here, encouraging your followers to move to Berkeley, to use this city for your own goals? So with respect to the question,

I am committed to resuming the boards and commissions.

One of the biggest challenges that we face is the length of the council agendas and so I'm committed to calling special meetings on major issues so that we can have more robust participation.

I'm committed to using online tools to increase community participation in our civic process. And I think during this Covid emergency, use of zoom and other remote platforms has actually increased the level of

participation in our city process. I want to see how we can use zoom and other tools to be able to have more engagement. Some people can't sit in a city council meeting for five hours, but they can tune in at the appropriate time to offer their public comment.

2. **Homeless:** Many residents express concern about the increasing number of people living on Berkeley sidewalks and streets and in the poor conditions of encampments like those along I-80. It is often said that the solution to homelessness is a regional problem. What programs will you propose to ensure care and safety for the homeless? Do you support a regional fair share program and how would you go about implementing such a program and what would be Berkeley's share? What locations in Berkeley would you consider for housing Berkeley's homeless?

## **Hill**

I want to reach out to Mayor Jesse Arreguin again, I understand where you are coming from. I've been gaslighted here for the last four years.

This race should be positive. This race should be for Berkeley, but it's politics and we have to admit that this is the political structure that this world is under. But I don't want to spend too much time on that because I'm here for the people of Berkeley and I want to remind all candidates that this is supposed to be a positive experience for our city. Something to save us during the effects of climate change.

As Berkeley's vice chair of the homeless commission, I have worked TREMENDOUSLY HARD TO MAKE SURE THAT homeless people are treated with efficiency in the funding resources, empathy within the hearts, and then making sure that they get out of homelessness.

We need to make sure that housing is prioritized for all income levels and I'm the only candidate who has offered solutions for every single bracket of income between low income to above median income.

With regards to the homeless situation, the policies that I would enact are the ones just like I've done in the homeless Commission, a people first sanctuary and model.

The city manager is already providing clean water and trash removal services. This was all done under the direction of the homeless Commission back in early March.

I would expand that model, making sure that people have the right to their personal property. I've had to work with women without medications, because their tents were removed, insulin, for example. I would increase the social safety net, providing for Veterans Health Care providing for WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE, especially those who are on the street. I will work to end criminalization of homelessness, making sure that their privacy is protected.

I'm the only candidate here who is working directly with the unhoused population of Berkeley, not just using them as a steppingstone and not just talking about their experiences divorced from their way of actually living.

I'm the only candidate that's experienced homelessness on this panel in the last four years, so I understand what it is like.

I want people to know that I care about all of our residents of Berkeley. I want to make sure that everyone has their social services met and I respect the time limit. So, thank you for that.

## **Arreguin**

Well, I just want to thank Aidan for running a positive issue-based campaign. And that's the kind of process that we should be promoting in the city.

The issue of homelessness is one of my top priorities.

And it's really unacceptable that we have so many people living on the streets. Mr. Hsiung may say that is principally my responsibility and I do take responsibility for the fact that we have unsheltered homelessness in

Berkeley, but this is a regional-national problem and Berkeley cannot solve this issue alone.

As mayor of Berkeley I'm working with my fellow mayors in Alameda County and the county of Alameda, to develop a countywide approach to addressing our homeless crisis.

I encourage you to vote yes on W to provide 150 million dollars a year for our county to be able to address our homeless crisis. I'm best positioned: the relationships I have, the experience I have, the relationships with our governor who's endorsed me, our state assembly member who's endorsed me, that positions me to be able to promote regional collaboration and as president of the Association of Bay Area Governments, I'm working, not only on homelessness, but also our housing affordability crisis to increase funding to build new permanent supportive housing to address our homeless crisis.

Berkeley has a disproportionate impact. There's no question about that, but we must provide compassion and care for the most vulnerable on our streets and so we're working to address the situation at interstate 80 and University Ave in the coming weeks. Not displacing people, but cleaning it up. We're working with the unhoused who are sheltering in place on our sidewalks to provide sanitation and services.

You know, if we disrupt encampments during this Covid-19 emergency it's going to result in people contracting and spreading Covid-19, so we follow the CDC guidelines and that's why you see tents on our streets, but we are committed to working to get people off the streets and into permanent supportive housing. My leadership on Berkeley Way to build permanent supportive housing, the work we're doing to master lease buildings and hotels to add to our permanent supportive housing inventory, it's critical.

## **Hsiung**

I'll just briefly say in response to Jesse's point that let's cut through the BS. Yeah, I mean, I agree.

I mean, this has been what's wrong with Berkeley politics for the last four years, people are fighting, throwing these sorts of personal barbs at each other so instead of talking about the issues. And you're right, we did send

out a direct mail piece that was very sober and neutrally talked about policy differences between us and you and I think that's fair.

What I think is unfair is false personal attacks spread through anonymous rumors and gossip and that's what the Berkeleyside article is. And again, I encourage you to read our response to the Berkeleyside article or listen to the reporting by more reputable journals like The New York Times, Ezra Klein, a Pulitzer Prize winning writer Glenn Greenwald about our actual intentions in this campaign.

But on the issue of homelessness. I think this is one of the failings of the city government of last four years, and we all see this. You drive by and you see the encampments. You see garbage piling up. I live near Gilman encampment, we've asked the city many times to work with Cal-Trans to at least pick up the garbage.

Give some basic services to these folks. And over the last couple years our city has not cooperated regionally. We fought with Cal-Trans, we tried to push homeless people onto those highway corridors and force them to take on the cost.

That doesn't work. Albany did the same thing to us when they paid people at the Albany Bulb to come to Berkeley. Oakland has done the same thing to us on many occasions, pushing homeless folks from their city into ours.

And we have to start working together and that means on the city council, too. Instead of attacking your adversaries, let's find common ground, ways for us to share our resources, share our vision, build a collective and democratic vision for the city that addresses the homelessness crisis, and it is a crisis.

If we start nailing down a regional agreement with Albany, Oakland, Emeryville and Caltrans, the County Board of Supervisors and we invest in long term sustainable plans, instead of just symptomatic alleviation like pushing people around, fining them or even throwing them in jail, we'll start to see the numbers go down and our campaign has an evidence and research phase proposal to do exactly that.

Thank you.

3. **Housing:** The Association of Bay Area Government sets the number of housing units for various income groups-that each City must produce within the next 5 years. Berkeley usually meets goals for market rate units but not those for affordable low-income households. ABAG may not be counting student units on University property. To meet the goals for affordable housing would you: 1) support requiring at least 20% low-income units on site in all developments; 2) close loopholes allowing developers to avoid paying Affordable Housing Mitigation Fees; and 3) ensure that University housing is counted.

## Arreguin

Well, I first want to just make one quick comment about a previous question. I am working to make our agenda shorter, you know, working to make sure that we have adequate time for community engagement and participation on important issues. It's far more improved than it was under the Tom Bates administration and I'm committed to doing more.

And I love our civic process, it's actually what excites me and what drew me to run for public office. I think citizen participation is the core of our community and we have brilliant people who care deeply about this city, who want to participate and help shape its future. I also want to acknowledge that the process on the Civic Center visioning was rushed and we could have done a better job there and I'm committed to working with our commissions and the community to help inform what the actual plan will be because we have not adopted a final plan.

On this issue, I support all the specific points that have been put forward and you are correct that group living accommodations aren't counted.

I am the president of the Association of Bay Area Governments, and I think I'm best positioned to be able to ensure that group living and University Housing can be counted towards our RHNA compliance, which I think is going to be critical as we're expecting a larger number, because the State has required that the regional plan is for 441,000 units. Mr. Hsiung may say that Berkeley has only built 22 units of affordable housing. If you look at the pipeline report, we've actually permitted 338 additional units, some of which are under construction right now. So, we do need to invest in more affordable housing, and we need

to find cheaper ways to build affordable housing, we need to prioritize public land for affordable housing, and we need to leverage regional and state resources to build affordable housing.

Building affordable housing isn't just going to come out of thin air. You may promise that you want to house all the homeless. How are you going to pay for it? How are you going to do it? Where are we going to locate it? I haven't heard a credible plan from Mr. Hsiung about how to do that.

Golden Gates Fields is in Albany, it's not in Berkeley, I was able to bring \$42 million to Berkeley to build affordable housing. I'm the only candidate who's actually helped create over 100 million dollars in funding for affordable housing. I'm best positioned to get it done.

Thank you

## **Hsiung**

Yes, to all those questions and you're absolutely right that we have fallen far short of our RHNA (regional housing needs allocation).

I think we're at about 20% of the target over the time period under Jesse's administration and we're at over 100% of the market rate housing that was targeted over the last few years. Fundamentally, this is an issue for me about economic inequality. It's not just about housing. It's not just about permitting. Do we need zoning reform? Absolutely. You know, I agree that we need zoning reform, Jesse's coming around to this issue now. Before he was saying zoning reform was a declaration of war against our neighborhoods.

Do we need to streamline our building code? Absolutely. The cost of building is far too high because our zoning ordinance is a 449-page monstrosity. It is too hard to do everything from building an ADU, to upgrade your house to a duplex, or frankly building solar panels. I've seen this as an environmental attorney that there's too much bureaucracy in a lot of stuff that we want people to do more of, not less of.

We have to change Berkeley housing policies, it's just to get more funding. This is one area where Jesse's right that we do need more money.

And the reality is we're in a budget crisis where the city is facing a \$40 million budget shortfall.

It's a constitutional system in California where we cannot raise sales or property taxes, any more than we're currently raising them.

We have to find innovative models to finance affordable housing and supportive housing for the homeless. So, Jesse calls it a pipe dream, but as a former law professor and as a litigator, unlike Jesse, I've actually looked at the arguments for things like a wealth tax, for a much higher gross receipts tax and we can do them.

We can tax the biggest corporations and the wealthiest folks in the city, much more, and catch the revenue we need to fund affordable housing.

If we do that, not only do we reduce homelessness and help so many families that are housing insecure, we can make Berkeley a city that is livable for everyone. because Even the wealthy families in the hills are suffering when homelessness is crawling across the city.

## **Hill**

Thank you for this question, I agree with all three of your questions, there should be at least 20% onsite, low-income housing on all development projects. We do have to close the loopholes on housing mitigation fees and then University Housing should be counted in our description. Like I've mentioned earlier, I'm the only candidate that's provided actual resources for how we build these three income brackets low-income, very-low income and extremely low-income housing. So, very briefly, I would like to say that we can quickly enact production rehabilitation of nonprofit Community Controlled housing through public finance and then we should immediately emphasize on making sure our homeless population gets into this extremely low-income housing bracket.

This is just to create the programs to design, to purchase, rehabilitate, and refurbish closed abandoned buildings.

And then when it comes to higher income categories, we have to pursue more efficient use of our already existing housing supply. This includes home sharing, cooperative conversions of existing dwellings, and really looking towards a rent subsidy program that prevents evictions without just cause. On the low income level, we have to build human scale low

income housing that increases affordable housing supplies in our city. I don't think 20% is enough. I think we should have at least 50% low income development models in our housing supplies, we have to start using public-public partnerships to create public housing units, allowing residential ownership of the life of the unit.

The University currently involves themselves in public-private partnerships, giving land considerations to private entities for over 50 years and the University Housing that has just been built, the Enclave, the Panoramic, these are not included in the counts. They're also not included in the development process of the South Side plan. I don't want to argue, but I just want to say that I am deeply invested in our community.

I live here, I see the conditions that are here, and I understand the policy recommendations that are needed to make sure that everyone has a fair chance of being housed in the future.

4. **Density:** The Joint Subcommittee for the Implementation of State Housing Laws issued a report that did not require the insertion of clear and objective density standards and the protection of sunlight and existing solar installations into our Zoning Code. State legislation has been introduced to replace single-family zoning with multi-family units which will result in increased density. Berkeley is already more dense than most East Bay cities. Do you support inserting realistic objective density and daylight standards into our Zoning Code? What is the future of single-family zoning in Berkeley? Given our infrastructure, water supply limitations and geography, how dense should Berkeley become in the next 5 to 10 years and where in the City should this increased density be located?

**Hsiung**

Yeah, I think the central tension that this question is interrogating is the tension between our need for more housing in the state of California, specifically in the Bay Area, and

the fact is that there are folks who will absolutely be adversely affected. You know, not only the person who just spent \$20,000 on solar panels, but the grandmother who needs that parking spot in the front of their home and who's disabled and can't walk 15 minutes to their car every day.

I think there's been a false choice set out over the last couple years between NIMBYs and YIMBYs, between advocates for zoning reform and people who would like to preserve Berkeley's neighborhood character. Because the reality is, with homelessness skyrocketing and so many folks already trying to move into Berkeley, we have to adapt. The question is not whether Berkeley is going to change its whether we're willing to adapt to the change.

What I think we have to do is, let's absolutely pursue zoning reform and create by-right zoning and increase density.

But let's do it in a way that genuinely gives the community feedback in where that density is and how it's actually going to be deployed.

The model that I really believe in is Vienna, Austria. Vienna is a city that has some of the lowest housing costs in the entire world.

They have by-right zoning and inclusionary zoning, so it allows for low income housing. It allows for zoning by-right that allows for building to happen quickly, efficiently and cheaply.

But it's all run by neighborhood councils, so their neighborhood councils are given objectives, they're given timelines, by which they have to meet those objectives.

But they're also given a lot of discretion to decide how this construction actually happens and what they've created in Vienna is not only beautiful architecture that meets the aesthetic qualities of local neighborhoods,

but they also have development that meets the needs of the local community, whether it's additional parking in a particular development because one particular neighborhood needs some more parking, or

maybe green spaces in another area where the neighborhood really cares about green spaces. If we combine the objectives of building more housing and building more affordable housing for folks who need the housing, and

giving communities autonomy on how that's going to be done, then we can bring these two objectives in unison. And that's what I'd like to try to do as mayor.

## **Hill**

Thank you so much for this question. This has been a question that is encapsulated the last two years of my work in the city of Berkeley. Berkeley's density is increasingly high.

I can only point to my work trying to fight against UCBs attempt to build a 15-story building on People's Park. I don't think that's realistic. I don't think that helps anyone in the communities and it really discourages us from being able to use solar energy to our greatest efficiency.

One thing, primarily in my platform is energy efficient buildings and that's really emphasizing the role of communities such as yourselves, including single family households to really develop a way to reduce costs for utilities. I want to use subsidies and incentives to make sure that we have passive solar heating and cooling budgeting and techniques. This is even more important as we go into climate change with wildfire risks as well as increased rains and flooding. I agree that human centered zoning needs to be a primarily funded component of whatever plans we have to make in the future that prioritizes a balance between commercial and industrial needs.

Likewise, I'm a candidate who has put forward a platform in which the last 25 to 50 years of all our water supply levels in the city of Berkeley should be documented before development occurs.

Needless to say, I'm trying to make sure that people have access to housing, their basic needs, as well as resources for their future.

I want to make sure that housing, if it is constructed is low density. We can try accessory dwelling units, tiny houses, and we can use the vacant

properties that we have right now. For example, do we see a future where automobiles will be a primarily budgeted aspect of our city? If not, can we start looking at those properties and seeing if we can buy them for conversion to turn them into housing.

Needless to say, we need to think of different ways to house the residents of our city of Berkeley and using large density bonuses is not going to cut it in the short term.

## **Arreguin**

Thank you for this question. You know, I served on our zoning board and I probably of all the candidates have the deepest knowledge of Berkeley zoning code and the various planning issues that face our community. I believe very strongly in protecting the character of our neighborhoods. But building housing on our transit corridors and around our transit stations, that's the most appropriate place to build dense infill housing and that's what our general plan requires. So you know, I helped form the Joint Subcommittee on the Implementation of State Housing Laws, and this was in response to increasing state legislation which took away the ability of the City of Berkeley and other cities in the state of California to be able to have a greater voice in planning the future of their communities.

I felt it was important for the city to develop objective standards for issues like shadowing and sunlight and solar access **and** open space to better define what detriment means so that when the ZAB is looking at projects, that they have more objective criteria.

This would give the City of Berkeley more of a say in helping shape some of these projects, even those that are under the Housing Accountability Act and are automatically deemed by right. So I think that we need to find ways to develop objective standards.

You know, we are going to have to grow as a city, I am concerned about putting more density in the hills, particularly with the extreme fire risk and very narrow streets.

I want to call attention to the affordable housing plan that I developed with COUNCILMEMBER Harrison and COUNCILMEMBER Hahn which will be going to city council, hopefully some time the end of the year or next year, which would set a goal of 30% of all of our housing to be

affordable and emphasizes social housing, public housing, as an alternative model. You know, Vienna was talked about. I think that is a great model.

And I think we need to look at how we can preserve existing housing, to create affordability, Look at how we can add incremental density in our neighborhoods and focus on developing our corridors which are the most appropriate place for densification.

5. **Diversity:** Berkeley's African American population has significantly declined to a current low of less than 8%. Many residents support a right to return as a way to address the issue of displacement. The Planning Commission recently approved the Adeline Corridor Specific Plan which recommends 100% affordable housing at the Ashby Station. Do you support the recommendation for 100% affordable housing in the Adeline Corridor and how would you get it done. If you don't support 100% affordable housing, what do you support? Do you support the right to return, and if not, how would you maintain diversity in our City?

## Hill

I agree with all those things, the right to return, making sure that we have truly affordable housing. Those are all important things to mention in our city.

When it comes to diversity. It's important to know with the statement that came from Naomi Pete, she mentioned that there were three men in this race and I have to very assuredly point out that I'm not a man, I'm non-binary and I have a gender marker X on my ID.

It's important that when we talk about diversity, we think about the full spectrum of human existence and not just look at appearances.

That's kind of what this question is implying, what are the appearances that make it seem that black people such as myself have such a low percentage of being able to live in our city. And that really comes down to the quality of health. Not only are we lacking sustainable communities in

which we can thrive and understanding our own knowledge. We're consistently and for lack of a better word gaslit onto what our privileges, and our disabilities are in the city of Berkeley.

Many of you know the phrase super predator. But how many of you know that the ideas of a super predator are often used around countless black bodies in our city of Berkeley.

We have to talk about the history of what the development has been in our city. Not only has Berkeley been the first city to

desegregate the schools in our area, but you have to talk about the long-standing history of what it means to be Ohlone in our city. What it means to be a low-income person from all across Southern California.

We have to increase the diversity of our own population and that has a lot to do with housing, making sure people have a place to stay here in Berkeley. But to expand upon that. Where is the access to mental health care, the legal support, making sure that people have a better quality of life? I know one candidate here is probably going to use a token nice example of a black person on how to do this. But it's important to say that not one person can be an example for all of Berkeley's black population. We're not a monolith, and we need a different range of results to make sure that this is a welcoming city for all of us.

## **Arreguin**

Well, thank you very much for this question, I strongly support a right to return policy and I'm committed to trying to advance that next year as part of the adoption, of the Adeline Corridor, not just for Adeline but citywide and makes sure that people that were previously displaced from neighborhoods have the priority for affordable housing.

We also need to increase affordable housing, so people have the homes to move to and that's why I do support requiring inclusionary zoning in the Adeline Corridor, not feeing out, so that we have places that people can return to.

I support the goal of 100% affordable housing at the Ashby Station. The big challenge is that we're going to have to figure out is how to fund it. I'm willing to commit a significant amount of money from our measure O

bond, and Measure U1 tax revenue to help support that goal. I think the Planning Commission asked for a \$50 million commitment.

But we also need to leverage state and regional funding and once again, going back to my experience, experience does matter, particularly experience serving in local government and being able to leverage relationships to actually deliver for your community. As president of ABAG

I am best positioned to be able to help the City of Berkeley attract the dollars that we need to be able to build a 100% permanently affordable housing project at the Ashby station.

The Adeline Corridor plan set a goal of 50% affordability on the corridor. I support that. And to the extent we can exceed that I do support that as well. Fundamentally, what we have to do is prevent displacement and I'm proud that one tangible thing that we've done. I've been criticized a lot about homelessness, because it's a very visible problem.

Where we have made progress is helping stem the tide of homelessness, because if you have more people become homeless, you're not going to be able to solve the problem of homelessness. The tenant protection ordinance, the Covid emergency response ordinance,

the many policies that I have authored, and we passed at the Berkeley City Council to strengthen tenant protections and prevent displacement, the unprecedented investment in funding to prevent displacement.

The Berkeley Relief Fund and the housing retention program, all that is critical to keeping people in our community and keep the black and brown people in our community.

## **Hsiung**

I think the important thing to point out about the last few years, is that not only has the City of Berkeley not been giving people the right to return, but we've been actively engaging in policies that displace our black community and you know many of you have probably read about cases like Leonard Powell. But this is a classic example where you have an elderly black man and military veteran who served our community for a few decades, born and raised in Berkeley, and owned "his" home for decades.

In a code enforcement policy that went kind of sideways, was kicked out of his home, had a receiver take it over, install \$600,000 in renovations and suddenly this man who owned his own home, who was living in this community

as a neighbor and a resident for decades, now has a mortgage to the scale of hundreds of thousands of dollars and cannot afford to come back and live in what was his home.

It took many members of the community coming together to say we want Leonard Powell back in his own home. It took community members coming together to finance the mortgage that he needed to pay off the receivers debts and it took community members to fund the legal representation to fight with the City of Berkeley about who's going to be responsible for those debts. I was deeply involved in that campaign; Mr. Powell has been an amazing trooper with all the adversity he faced.

But he still feels very viscerally and personally, the impact of the city's policies on displacement. So we have to do better, and I'd say two things. One is it's not enough just to give people the right of return. It's not enough just to have an aspiration for 100% affordable housing.

We need to have a long-term strategic plan about how we can support our black community because this is a community that a few decades ago, when Gus Newport was mayor, 30% of Berkeley was black. Now it's less than 8 percent. I think the most recent census will probably show it's less than 5%

I absolutely support affirmative measures to make sure we're supporting including and empowering our black community members, including giving them grants, rather than kicking out of their homes, when code enforcement processes are going sideways.

6. **North Berkeley BART Station:** BART has classified the North Station as an urban center which calls for a minimum of 7 stories in the center of the existing low-density neighborhood. Berkeley signed an agreement with BART that development at the Station would be “in compliance” with the neighborhood. As Mayor what development parameters, height and type, would you specifically

propose that would be in compliance within the context of the existing neighborhood?

## **Arreguin**

Well, thank you for the question.

Assembly Bill 2923 which was passed by the legislature and the Berkeley City Council did not support, included language which locked us into the TOD guidelines that BART staff had developed and promulgated which says for a station like North Berkeley that you have to zone, a minimum of seven stores. So, we are required to have to zone at a minimum of seven stories. If Berkeley was not at the table, working with BART to help plan for a TOD development in North Berkeley station, because it's not the city's land, it's BART land,

then we would not be able to work with BART to shape the project to be contextual. The process that I am leading and helped launch, to do a community planning process around North Berkeley and Ashby Station best positions Berkeley to be able to work with BART to develop a project that fits into the character of that neighborhood. I've said and I will repeat - I do support a project that is contextual to the surrounding single-family residential neighborhood, but steps down as you approach the edges of the project. But I do think there are enormous benefits to the city, not just in addressing our housing affordability crisis but also, by making improvements to make the streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians around the station,

an extension of the Ohlone Greenway, neighborhood-serving retail and a public Plaza. There's a lot of great things that can come out of this project, but fundamentally, the vision of the community has to be what shapes the project.

I'm very committed to that. I'm very sensitive to the fact that North Berkeley station is unique from any other station in the whole system, because it is in the middle of a single-family residential neighborhood. We have to work with BART to help negotiate the parameters of a project that are contextual and I'm committed to doing that, I want to reiterate that commitment, we should maximize the level of affordable housing there, to the extent we can.

I look forward to the community helping shape the vision for that project.

## **Hsiung**

Great. And this is going to have to be my last question. I deeply apologize to all the members of this forum because of an error on our part, we accounted for one hour.

I'll say briefly just as a closing statement that some of the things Jesse just said, and that we've said in the last hour show our shared values and vision.

We all believe in more public housing in Berkeley, not just for the unhoused residents, but for working class people.

We all believe in giving the community a voice in the development of the city, rather than just allowing developers to control the future of Berkeley.

We all believe in bolder action for climate change. So, let's focus on the ways we can work together, not the things that tear us apart because we desperately need more unity in the City right now.

I think that when we talk about the North Berkeley BART STATION, this is such a great example, because I've talked to hundreds of residents about this station. When I talk to the residents, while there's a lot of anger, there's a lot of recrimination, what I hear, honestly, is a lot of shared values, people want a lower cost of living. They want that grandmother, she's scared, she's not going to get to park outside of her home anymore and won't have an accessible place to park their car.

They want a beautiful community that feels like it's Berkeley. These are things and values that we all share. And I think if we sit down together and have processes that feel genuinely inclusive, authentically empowered and give everybody a voice in these processes we can move forward.

On the specifics of the North Berkeley BART STATION, everybody agrees that we need more building in the city, and I agree with that, too.

The question is, what type of building do we need and who's going to have a stake in that process. I think my fundamental difference between Jesse on this process is I think we should give communities real power

over these decisions. We should give communities real influence over the outcomes that are going to affect their neighborhoods and communities, much more than anyone else. While we absolutely need to build, we should set targets for those communities to build more housing. Let's give back to the community, the power to determine the future of their own neighborhoods.

With that, I'm going to have to go. Thank you all very much for joining and I appreciate the opportunity to share a little bit about our vision.

## **Hill**

Thank you for this question. I lived in North Berkeley for a small bit of my time here in the city of Berkeley, and the BART STATION AND THE Ohlone Greenway have always been fundamental to my existence.

I want to say, I do think that the mayor and myself have a very similar vision. I don't think Candidate Hsiung necessarily has the same type of vision that is inclusive of the community of Berkeley here. But I do agree that we definitely need to think about the ways in which we are transitioning into the future, as far as what inclusionary housing looks like.

Many, many Members here have mentioned single family households are being excluded from development plans in our city. I don't agree that there should be large scale housing at the north Berkeley BART station.

I'm partial to making sure that there are basic needs met for all of our city members and that includes food services, mental health services, and legal protection. But I do agree that housing is essential and I'm more of a fan of accessory dwelling units, I believe that people should have low income housing units that are accessible for them. I believe in single family housing.

Likewise, I believe in town housing to even bridge condos into development plans as well. The possibilities are endless. I do think there has been a robust system in place to talk about the North Berkeley BART station.

But what we haven't really talked about is the environmental context in which we are going to live in the future.

How are we going to make sure that people have access to reliable transportation on the BART system while also being able to access their housing nearby and what is the relevance of people who are using that BART station compared to the population that is going to be utilizing that housing as well. I think that anything that we're developing in Berkeley, as far as housing should be primarily for Berkeley residents. I do think we have to negotiate a contract with BART, because I believe that public lands and the lands that are under the jurisdiction of Berkeley should belong primarily to the Berkeley residents and not necessarily to a transportation agency.

But we have to look at the historical factors regarding that. And as mayor, I'll make sure that we do a just implementation on how we can achieve affordable housing in our city.

- 7. University and City Partnership:** The last UC Long Range Development Plan was approved without public input. Campus enrollment increased over what was allowed in that Plan. A new Plan is currently being discussed, but the campus wants that plan to be built on these higher enrollment numbers. Will you guarantee a robust citizen participation process that includes consideration of not only services provided to the campus by the City, but also neighborhood issues of traffic and density *before* a new Plan is approved?

## Hill

Thank you. Yes, absolutely. I think the idea that the university has its own state regulated agency that doesn't necessarily negotiate with the residents themselves is something that's deeply wrong in our system of governance and our shared governance within the city of Berkeley.

As a student of UC Berkeley, I can only see this firsthand in which the university has these private meetings with the UC regents and basically therefore donors, they're not necessarily inclusive of students.

The prospects of student engagement rely on the Associated Student Body and we don't necessarily have a voice and what we want to see as far as our housing is concerned. When it comes to the UC and city relationship. I think I'm the best prepared because I have the political

clout, the power to make sure that the university recognizes my status as a student and that the city recognizes my status as a commissioner, or to be mayor to actually develop policies that are inclusive of the people that are missing.

I believe in accessibility and inclusion. All people at our universities, especially our public universities, deserve the right to a tuition free quality education and the housing ideas that the university has drafted and their long term development plan doesn't necessarily engage the crisis that we are in today. The university is losing 10s of thousands of dollars on missing money because of the covid-19 pandemic, however, that research, the ability for the university to see these problems were always there. I think the university needs to take a step back. I think the City of Berkeley needs to take a step forward.

We have to democratize the UC regents, making sure their meetings are conducted in public and open settings dedicated to the Brown Act and making sure that all students and residents have a firmly planted voice to make sure that their living adjustments are taken care of without oversight and without growth from UC.

## **Arreguin**

Thank you for the question. This is an issue I've been working very actively on over the past several years. You know, sadly, my predecessor Tom Bates left the city with a very bad deal.

He negotiated an agreement with UCB that started us with \$1.2 million in annual payments. Now it's at \$1.8 million.

But enrollment has increased by 11,000 additional students beyond what they planned for in their 2020 long range development plan. so I first approached Chancellor Christ and said that we need to negotiate a new agreement. There was not a real sincere commitment to negotiate something in good faith that would adequately compensate the city for its fiscal impacts. Our analysis has found that the University's annual fiscal impact is \$21 million a year.

It's not to say the university doesn't contribute to our tax base. But \$21 million a year in services. That impacts our infrastructure, that impacts our fire and police response, our housing market and taxpayers are dealing with the burden of that. It's s increasing your tax bills while

decreasing your quality of life. So we sued the University, and we are not settling at this time. We are holding out for a fair agreement, more than \$500,000, which is what the university promised us.

A fair agreement that fairly compensates the city for the impacts the University has on our community.

The next long-range development plan presents an opportunity for us to ensure our community's needs and voices are heard in the process. We're going to be scheduling a public hearing. Stay tuned for information in which the university will be presenting on its long range development plan and I want to solicit community input to help inform the comments and the analysis the city is going to provide on the LRDP and I'm committed to negotiating a fair agreement around the university's additional growth that mitigates impacts on traffic that mitigates impacts on our infrastructure, our streets, our emergency services and our housing market.

## **Hsiung**

Yes. Citizen participation is crucial for the future of both the city and the university. And, as a former faculty member at a university (Northwestern School of Law in Chicago), I have an understanding of how to create change within a university context. Our administration will focus on shared values and concerns while also pushing the university to contribute more to local infrastructure—and listen more to community concerns.

8. **Public Safety:** This year, Council began a process to reimagine the Police Department, shifted traffic enforcement to a new Department of Transportation and indicated a change should be made in how mental health problems are handled. During the year, the number of people killed and wounded by gunfire in Berkeley has increased threefold over last year and the year isn't over. -What changes in the Police Department do you support, or will propose, to address injustice issues while providing public safety? How will the Department of Transportation, increased mental health services and your proposals be funded?

## **Arreguin**

Well, our Police Department accounts for 44% of our general fund and that number is going to increase to 50% in just a few years. So, it's not sustainable, the CalPERS costs alone are going to be a significant unfunded liability in our city. So, we have to find a way to control the size and the amount of our police department budget and control those expenditures, including over time. So, we're beginning to take a very careful look at the police department budget and particularly overtime spending to manage those costs.

Sadly, we have seen an increase in shootings in Berkeley over the past several months and this is in keeping with what we're seeing in other communities during this covid-19 emergency for some very troubling reason there's been an increase in shootings

during this covid-19 emergency and sadly people have lost their lives. It's totally unacceptable. So, while we need to look at reimagining public safety, we have to focus on public safety.

I do believe we need a Police Department. We need our Police Department to be the right size and the right focus and I think by moving money out of our police department budget and investing in programs like expanding our mobile crisis team or a nonprofit specialized care unit system, looking at traffic stops and moving that into a department of transportation to focus on vision zero, pedestrian and bicycle safety.

That will free up money in our police department budget to manage this blooming fiscal challenge and it will also ensure that our police are focused on what they were trained to do, what they signed up to do, which is the prevention of crime. We also have to talk about community policing as part of this conversation. I want to make sure we get police officers out of their cars, walking beats, cops on bikes in our neighborhoods to build relationships, we need to focus on crime prevention through environment design. We need to expand our neighborhood watch groups in our city and we need to focus on violence crime prevention, because at the end of the day, if we can help prevent shootings and crime from happening to begin with, that will also keep our community safe.

## **Hill**

Thank you for this question. The big question is always, how we pay for our initiatives going forward. I've put forward a People's Budget which looks at funding allocations between five years cycles, not only will we re-adjust and work with the city auditor's department to see how much money is being utilized efficiently but we also have to make sure that our capital is sustained in our city. And luckily, because of our state legislators, we have a high tax credit rating. We can utilize the funding through those resources. When it comes to police to disarmament, I want to correct something that Jesse had said originally.

He believed that I am in favor of a 50% police reduction. Now I am in favor of that, but what does that actually mean? I want to make sure that the 50% budget of our total city dollars that police are getting currently right now is actually 25% of the budget, and I don't think that's too much to ask for to have that reduction. A large share of funding that goes to our Police Department actually goes to the patrolling and this is mostly in low income neighborhoods, specifically with people of color, I disagree with that. When it comes to police disarmament, I'm actually looking forward to police accountability. I want to make sure that those who have the proper readiness response training, those who do not think quickly or act aggressively, those who don't have any history of domestic violence, they're the ones that should be in charge of policing and we have to make sure that those who have litigation issues are definitely not patrolling our streets.

Furthermore, when it comes to making sure that people are safe, especially with gunfire, I support using modern technologies such as a shot spotter technology in which we can have community readiness programs. I want to work with all levels of government to make sure our standards of accountability, accessibility and transparency are available.

This also includes the range of cyber-crimes. I want to make sure that there's digital literacy for all people and we can establish programs to develop community readiness. And likewise, I haven't heard really a discussion about what happens to our undocumented members of our community here. How do we make sure that federal agents aren't necessarily advocating for their arrest or for their harm? We have to make sure that we have community readiness programs available within our city. I know that my time is up, but I definitely want to expand upon this.

**Wayne**

We support Councilmember Davila's proposal to shift 50% of police funding to community services. The department has itself indicated that 75% of its time is spent on homelessness. But armed officers are not the right tool to address that problem. Reinvesting in our community does not need to come at the cost of public safety. By allowing officers to focus on the areas they have been trained to address—crime—we will see better outcomes for both social services and safety.

9. **Wildfires:** Wildfires have become more intense and there are more frequent Red Flag Days and power outages. Berkeley has three designated high-risk danger zones, and the whole City is at risk should a wildfire start. Years ago, the City published a list of addresses on streets so narrow that Fire Department access is restricted and many of these parking restrictions have not be implemented, and defensible space standards were enacted but not enforced. What specific measures will you propose be done about this? How and when will these measures be implemented and enforced?

## Hill

Thank you for your beautiful question. I totally understand where this is coming from. The resilience needed to have the capacity to fight these dangerous wildfires are a heavily burdening, especially on the North Berkeley Hills area, I agree that we definitely need a right to energy to make sure that not only PG&E but our community programs have access to reaching residents, if there is a need because of a wildfire. We've learned through first-hand experience within the last two years of wildfire prevention training that AC alerts aren't the best system that can make sure people are presented. When it comes to those parking allocations,

that's also a major issue when it comes to North Berkeley and wildfire prevention.

All it takes is one car stopping in the middle of the road, and then the rest of our residents are unable to reach safety. So how can we include that? We have to make a joint measure with the Berkeley Police Department and the Fire Department to make sure that people have accessibility to their houses, that we have early warning systems in place where people can evacuate to safe areas inside of Berkeley.

A major part of my platform is making sure our supportive environment is intact so the open spaces that we have can protect people and provide temporary refuge.

We have to really make sure that people have access to protecting their assets in their houses and I work with neighborhood councils and residents' associations to provide these key resources. Right now I'm working with the Berkeley Community Emergency Response Team to make sure vulnerable people have access to CERT training manuals, begin to understand how our city works, making sure that people are connected and having the capacity for resilience and when we are preparing for these disasters needs to be first and foremost.

Because these disasters are not going to go away anytime soon. Not until we become carbon neutral and until then we have to make sure that people's public safety is paramount.

## **Arreguin**

Well, thank you for this question. You know, every single time I smell smoke in the air, I'm deeply concerned that there's a fire actually happening in Berkeley. That and the orange skies and the smoke, I think it calls attention to the extreme risk that we face from the wild land urban interface. So, several things, the safe passage is a program that we launched and we've begun to implement is really critical to making sure that our streets, particularly in the hills that are so narrow, that emergency vehicles and vehicles that need to get out of the hills are not able to have egress. So even facing a \$40 million budget deficit, which we did balance this year very painfully, we did preserve funding for the safe passage program, and we are going to be working to implement that.

I believe we need to restrict density in the hill's districts because of the extreme risk that we face. Mayor Dean has talked about this. I do support that and will work with her on that.

Then we need to accelerate our vegetation management, our inspection program and we need an emergency alert system. I want to encourage everyone to vote yes and measure FF on the Berkeley ballot. While this is a tax increase and we're very sympathetic to the impact of that, this will provide eight and a half million dollars a year for Berkeley to not just improve our fire and emergency response but also to be better prepared for the threat of wildfires. I think this is critical for Berkeley to continue to prepare. We need to ensure that our paths are clear and make investments in our paths as those our emergency evacuation routes, we need to have a clear plan around evacuation where people go and how people should evacuate in the event of a wildfire. But at the end of the day, it's about preventing the wildfire. It's reducing hazardous fuels in our parks, in Tilden, and on people's property. It's vegetation management. It's undergrounding. It's looking at the issue of utility wires and how we are prepared and how we respond

## **Wayne**

Our campaign is fully committed to supporting the Berkeley families threatened by wildfires and climate change, including:

- A state-of-the-art emergency communication system
- Pushing for all power lines to be undergrounded
- Creating safe emergency pathways for families and emergency responders
- A city-wide wildfire relief plan, including shelter for families

In the long term, the only solution is effective action on climate change. Yet our city still plans to wait 30 years to reach carbon neutrality. Our plan, supported by leading climate scientists, is to accelerate that timeline to 5 years. As an environmental attorney, I have represented clients in massive solar financings. I know we can make Berkeley the first carbon neutral city in the nation

10. **Economy:** The pandemic has hit the economy hard. Berkeley is said to have a \$40 million budget deficit. Many are unable to pay their rent or mortgages. The eviction moratorium will expire in March 2021 and renters will face paying back rent. There are measures on the November State and local ballots that, if passed, will raise taxes on businesses and homes. What specific programs will you recommend be removed or restructured in responding to the upcoming Berkeley budget deficit? What will you do to protect tenants who are unable to pay the full amount of back rent and low-income homeowners facing foreclosure based on pandemic related circumstances? Do you worry that small business and especially older homeowners may be driven out by higher taxation?

## **Arreguin**

Thank you. I just want to clarify that we don't have a \$40 million budget deficit, we adopted a balanced budget. It was very hard, and I think we had one of the most transparent budget processes that I've ever participated in my 12 years on the city council.

We do know that we're going to have to make more adjustments to our budget. So what we need to focus on fundamentally is health and safety, how we are best prepared to deal with this pandemic and I just have to say that I'm really proud that Berkeley and the Bay Area has really led in our covid-19 response and the fact that we have an under 1.5% positivity rate is due to the early intervention that we took and all that you have done, the people of Berkeley, to address this very serious threat to the safety of our community.

We have got to prioritize health and safety and baseline services.

We hope that a Cures Act will be coming, but President Trump has said that's going to wait until after the election, which is insane and irresponsible while businesses are suffering, and people are losing their homes. I'm proud that in Berkeley, in response to the covid-19 emergency the day the shelter in place order took effect the additional moratorium that I introduced was adopted as an urgency ordinance and we launched the Berkeley Relief Fund to raise \$4.4 million to provide emergency grants to our small businesses, our residential tenants and

our arts organizations. We're going to have to continue to support our businesses and our residents to make sure that they are not displaced.

The eviction moratorium actually will continue after March 2021, because the eviction moratorium remains in effect until the end of the local emergency, but the issue is what happens after that for the small businesses and for the people who live in residential housing. We need to have a program that's focused on providing supportive economic support for residents and for the small businesses. I personally think we should bring back commercial rent control because small businesses are struggling to pay exorbitant rents and it's not just the small businesses, it's commercial landlords that are gouging those small businesses.

## **Hill**

Thank you. With the city I definitely believe that there are some programs that can be increased, including the revolving loan fund, making sure that our small businesses have access to capital, especially those that are below market rate, micro financing at Berkeley, our opportunity fund. These are all great ideas that we could expand upon in our future.

However, I'm not going lie to you, the future of our economy and our society looks pretty grim and that's why in my priority budget, I've really focused on small businesses and vendors, making sure that people who need access to their cost of living have it.

What I do agree, is that we need taxation on highly industrial as well as land aggregation industries, including our shared ride services, as well as those with toxic waste, they need to pay a higher percentage and clean up as well as making sure that their workers are protected. And that's why I have a platform based off of a safe workplace and environmental hazards, making sure that workers are protected first and foremost.

I have a strong platform on making sure that our small businesses get residential assistance. It's not okay that many of our small mom and pop shops in Berkeley are having to pay all of their rent while residential tenants are not having to pay the same amount.

Their work pays the rent, so it's important that we protect them in the future. Likewise, I support that the Business Improvement districts have

union representation are more inclusive of street vendors and I really want to work towards a circular economy. That really means making sure that we produce non-polluting renewable efficiency energy streams. Especially, specifically towards job creation and then really work towards making sure that US. CORPORATIONS maintain business practices that don't jeopardize workers, damage the environment or interfere with our essential government affairs.

## Wayne

I support efforts to prevent evictions for anyone who's rent deficiency is due to the pandemic. While we should seek state and federal aid to assist the neediest tenants, we should also consider using local funds to assist if state and federal aid are unavailable. Similar support should be provided to homeowners, based on need. Taxation should be focused only on the largest corporations and the wealthiest families. And our plan is to use novel taxes, such as a wealth tax on only households with \$10 million or more in assets, to ensure this happens.

11. **Climate Action:** Berkeley has adopted a Climate Action Plan. Yet despite parking restrictions in large developments, congestion has increased. Development has not been required to meet higher environmental standards and sea level rise threatens large areas of West Berkeley and along creek drainages. What is the SINGLE most important response to climate action that you would immediately propose if you become mayor?

## Hill

The single most important need in our community is making sure that we have clean water and safe food to eat. Without those basic needs, there's very little we can do without food and water. We can't drive without food and water. We can't look for work. Those are the important qualities we need to make sure we have.

I've already put forward a platform, which makes sure that we document our water supply levels to at least 25 to 50% regardless of any development.

But we also have to think about new ways of operating, especially in this global environment. I have a platform on strengthening regulations on genetic engineering, making sure that we don't use seeds from Monsanto to provide our basic needs. Likewise, I'm a strong candidate against pesticide use in the city of Berkeley. We have to make sure, especially, our children's health is protected at all costs.

What your question is really driving at is how we make sure that transportation is accessible in our city. Right now, because the lack of public transportation, even though it was free during the Covid-19 pandemic people are still using their cars and ride sharing opportunities because it's safer, more reliable and more transparent to them.

I think that we need transparency in our public transportation network. We need a public transportation that works, that's based on connectivity and efficiency and that's providing easy to understand information routes and rates.

We have to make this readily available for all consumers and make sure that their transit is reliable timing. Accessibility is such a huge issue in our city of Berkeley, the needs of our disabled community are so underpinned and undervalued within our city.

We kind of as a city stop at just the curb ramps, but when in reality we need to make sure that there's non-petroleum powered use and buses, making sure that there's not carbon dioxide coming out as exhaust fumes and we really do need to make sure that all of our transportation is free, or at a rate that is nominal to make sure that people's cost of living is accessible for our city government.

## **Arreguin**

Thank you. Well, the single biggest thing that we need to do is reduce transportation emissions, they count for 60% of our greenhouse gas emissions according to our inventory. That means phasing out fossil fuel vehicles and that means creating the infrastructure in our city for electric vehicles, that means finding ways to help subsidize the cost of people transitioning to electric vehicles, that means expanding transit access,

including looking at a shuttle system to connect parts of Berkeley that are not well served by transit.

To get out of their cars and to walk and to bike. That means the investments in safer streets. I agree with Aidan that our streets are not safe for seniors and people with disabilities and even pedestrians. We need to do more to advance our complete streets policy

and our Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan. So by investing in safer streets, by investing in protected bike lanes and expanding bike boulevards, we can create a city that encourages people to not drive a combustion engine car. We can make that transition happen. That's really critical. Governor Newsome, who endorsed me, recently announced that the state's setting a goal of transitioning away from fossil fuel vehicles and engines by the year 2035. What's critical is having the safer streets, the bike infrastructure, the transit infrastructure and to transition people to electric vehicles. That will make a considerable difference in reducing our emissions and moving us on a path to a more equitable and sustainable future. And I do agree that we should strive towards the goal of free transit because that will encourage people to use public transportation, Lastly, I have introduced legislation which will be coming to the city council soon to require that all buildings, large buildings require TDM measures: transportation demand management, such as transit passes, car share and just like they do in downtown Brooklyn.

## **Wayne**

The most important response is to set a legally binding timeline for carbon neutrality that is consistent with the science. While action within 10 years is needed, we should set our timeline at 5 years to ensure that, even with delays, we are acting with the urgency that the climate crisis demands.

12. **Taxes:** The question of unequal assessment of taxes based on square footage has come before the Council for years without resolution. However, Council placed yet another measure based on square footage on the upcoming November ballot. As Mayor, what are you going to do about this, and specifically about measure, FF,

that people might support its purpose but not about how it is going to be implemented?

## **Arreguin**

Well, a couple of things. Well first you know; our tax proposal should be legally enforceable and should be grounded in reality. There have been candidates to putting forward proposals such as a wealth tax to generate \$2.5 billion predicated on taxing large businesses.

We only have a handful literally of large enough businesses to be able to generate that kind of increase gross receipts tax, we are not San Francisco. We don't want to drive out our businesses as well. Any tax proposal should be grounded in realistic numbers and should be equitable, we need to promote progressive taxation, I support prop 15 and urge you all to vote for it. Let's close the commercial tax loophole.

We do need to look at ensuring that businesses, large businesses pay their fair share, I support measure GG to ensure that rideshare companies Uber and Lyft are paying to help improve our streets. But with respect to the issue of assessments, you know, this issue came to our attention recently because of a group of community members. We need to fix this problem. It's not fair that some people are paying less, even though they own more square footage, and some people are paying more even though they have less square footage.

This is before a budget and Finance Committee, which I serve on and we'll be discussing it in a couple of weeks. Councilmember Bartlett's proposal to look at modifying our method of assessment is on the agenda, it's going to take some time, because we need to work with the county assessor's office in the planning department, but I am willing to explore putting the measure on the ballot in the next election, a measure to amend our tax measures to adjust to a different method of property tax assessment that is more equitable.

Because it does disproportionately impact people who do not have a significant amount of money but are paying very high taxes and we need to be mindful about our tax increases because we don't want to price people, including seniors out of Berkeley.

## **Hill**

Yes, thank you for this, something that I've noticed as far as our taxes in Berkeley is that they're just not equitable to people's cost of living.

I'm going to say very firmly that I agree that Jesse is the best candidate in- regards to this because he has access to those meetings. Those budget cycles.

They're able to know the key players and the tax rebates and making sure that people are held accountable. However, if we're looking for a future version of Berkeley, one that's deeply focused on making sure that our quality of life is raised for our city, I think I'm the best candidate for that. Right now, in our city of Berkeley, nonprofits have to always reapply for their tax exemption statuses, missing one application could be the determinant between whether a business is staying in Berkeley or not.

I want to make sure that our council on economic recovery, if I was implemented as Mayor, is working primarily with business owners, as well as property managers to make sure that their needs are met. Likewise, when it comes to taxation, I do agree with the mayor that we do need progressive taxation and I do heavily believe that we do need taxes, not necessarily on sales tax for consumers, but those on corporations.

However, my taxation policy is really focused on decentralization, working towards renewable energy infrastructures, especially in the urban context.

What I would work on for property taxes, but all taxes in general is really changing our tax planning laws to promote restoration and revitalization of degraded lands, improvements of our watershed management practices and really protecting as well as re-introducing a list of threatened endangered species in sub urban and rural areas.

And so why does this work? It works primarily because we're focusing on capital gains taxes and not necessarily property for personal use taxes, we're supporting reenactments of a unitary tax which California once had on multinational corporations and my tax structure really focus on a full deductibility of state and local property sales and income taxes as well.

**Wayne**

We will work with homeowners to ensure that our property tax system is clear, efficient, and seen as equitable by a broad range of stakeholders. We should also create clear appeal mechanisms, with timelines for responses, to ensure that errors in implementation are quickly corrected.

## **Candidates Closing Statements**

### **Arreguin**

Thank you. Well, thank you all for participating. Thank you, Aidan, for staying on.

I Appreciate the dialogue; it has been AN HONOR to service as Mayor these past four years and this has been a challenging time for our community.

With the covid-19 pandemic, white supremacists marching in our streets, the wildfire risks, climate change, housing and homeless crisis. We have addressed all these issues, head on. I'm proud of the progress that we made, but there's a lot more work to do. I am the most experienced candidate.

We are already working to make positive progressive change happen for the city.

I'm the only candidate who's been endorsed by a broad coalition of elected officials community organizations, and community leaders throughout Berkeley. They support me because of the work that I've done, they support me because they know that I can get things done and that I'm committed to moving Berkeley forward.

I am proud to be endorsed by the East Bay Times, that happened today, the Sierra Club, the Alameda Labor Council, the Firefighters Association, the nurses, the Alameda County Democratic Party, BBC and Berkeley Citizens Action and the League of Conservation Voters.

Many other supporters are Governor Gavin Newsom, Robert Reich, our Assembly member, seven of the eight members of the Berkeley city council, the entire school board, regional mayors, our county supervisor

many and many city Commissioners and community leaders. I'm honored to have their support.

I feel that there's more work to do. I asked for your vote. Let's work together to create a dynamic and equitable future for our city.

## **Hill**

Thank you for that. Firstly I'd like to say thank you to everyone for watching this forum. I know the election has been a grueling process.

There seems to be something coming out every single day. And I hope this forum brings a little bit more clarity on who we are and what our positions are.

I'm happy to have the endorsement of that eighth member of the city council and that's really because I'm primarily rooted in our community.

Something that you should consider when you're voting for Mayor this election cycle is, I'm the only one, the only candidate who has really talked about implementing changes in our health care system.

Alta Bates is still under attack. And I really want to include dental, mental health, pharmaceutical or chiropractic vision and hospice care into our city planning budget.

I want to make sure that child-care and early childhood development is available for all Berkeley residents with children.

I support paid sick leave and paid family medical leave for all workers in our city of Berkeley.

As your mayor of Berkeley my budget priorities will account for both environmental and social costs and this includes public assets and environmental protections. I want to modernize and expand our cities drinking water and waste management treatment.

Likewise I support, safety first outcomes, pathways to home ownership and support for small businesses.

Truly, we are at a moment in history where the political decisions we make now, will affect us for of the rest of our collective history.

As humans, we have the ability to protect our commons: THE LAND, THE SEA, THE AIR AND EACH OTHER.

We also have the ability for great chaos. However, for true equity to be reached in our city we need to target the specific things facing our residents, the lack of food, the lack of access to housing, their basic needs not being met and the civil disparities that leads some into situations of violence. As your mayor candidate I will make sure that all of these are prioritized and while I might not have the most experience, I do have the most understanding of the needs of our city, the needs of our communities, because I am a Berkeleyan and I want to make sure I represent you whole-heartedly well. Thank you.

## **Wayne**

Twenty years ago, as a student organizer under Michelle Obama's leadership in the public housing projects of Chicago, I learned that real change comes from ordinary people working together. Now is the time for us to heed that lesson. We face rising housing costs, skyrocketing homelessness, a pandemic-ravaged economy, and a looming climate crisis. Only a grassroots movement can overcome these challenges and bring a Green New Deal to Berkeley.

I'm ready to fight for that vision. As an animal rights activist, I've risked my freedom to challenge climate-destroying factory farms, with support from Ezra Klein and Amy Goodman.

I'm ready to harness the innovation of Berkeley. My time as a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow at MIT and as faculty at Northwestern School of Law has given me the relationships and expertise, I need to implement the right policies.

And I'm ready to use a different style of politics -- authentic, brave, and fueled entirely by small donations (not corporate PACs) -- to inspire our residents to be part of the change.

I am not a traditional politician. I'm a grassroots organizer who has led thousands in finding their voice. Berkeley needs leadership that recognizes the power in each of us. Together, we will bring the Green New Deal to life.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**