College Democrats at UCSC

Santa Cruz City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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| All questionnaires will be published publicly on the UCSCDems.com websiteMust be completed and submitted by August 30th, 2020Send completed, by email, to BlueSlugs@gmail.com |

1. **CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION**
	* Elected Office You Seek: Santa Cruz City Council
	* Candidate Name: Elizabeth Conlan
	* Occupation/Profession: Scientist
	* Email address (this is our preferred manner of communication unless you specify otherwise): conlanforcouncil@gmail.com
	* Home/Office Phone:
	* Cell Phone: 805-396-9051
	* Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_X\_\_ No
	* Former campaigns for elected office, and their outcomes: n/a
	* Appointed offices currently/formerly appointed to: n/a
	* Organizations you are a member of: Santa Cruz YIMBY & YIMBY Action
2. **DEMOCRATIC AFFILIATION**
	* Approximate number of years as a registered Democrat? \_2\_ Santa Cruz County \_14\_\_ Elsewhere
	* Describe your involvement with the Democratic Party at the Local, State or National level over the last few years.

Although I’ve phonebanked and canvassed for national-level offices, I’ve only recently been getting more involved in advocacy at the state and local level. I think moving to Santa Cruz and feeling like this could be a place where I spend more than a few years has made me realize how important local policies are to the community.

1. **INFORMATIONAL QUESTIONS**

**General Questions**

1. What are your main campaign priorities?

My main campaign priorities are incentivizing and approving housing for all income levels, an outreach-focused approach to homelessness, and supporting a community-led recovery to the pandemic and recession that uplifts those need and positions Santa Cruz to lead as a model sustainable city.

1. What specific policy changes will you prioritize should you be elected?

Should I be elected, I would advance policies to address housing affordability and availability including permitting building of 100% affordable projects on city land such as downtown parking lots and pushing for pro-housing reform like Portland’s recently approved “Residential Infill Project,” which allows quadplexes on almost any residential lot and up to six homes on any lot if half of them are available to low-income residents. An outreach-focused approach to homelessness would redirect from the current reliance on the police department in responding to calls about those experiencing homelessness and have other trained professionals, like social workers, respond. An equitable recovery needs to be one that does not leave behind historically disenfranchised groups. We should be investing locally and pursuing sustainable measures such as improving the walkability and bikeability of our city.

**Affordable Housing**

1. Scenario: As a council member, a housing development is being proposed that would create 100 new housing units. The development meets the minimum affordable housing requirement, but less than your desired number of affordable units.
	* Would you approve the housing development even if it does not meet your personal preference for the number of affordable units created? Please elaborate.

Yes. The current inclusionary rate for new projects is 20% so 20 of those units would be deed-restricted affordable. My goal on Council will be to maximize the total number of affordable homes created in Santa Cruz. Combining market rate housing and affordable housing through the inclusionary rate allows for the market rate units to subsidize the affordable ones. In the absence of a city fund for affordable housing construction, this is among the only mechanisms that we have for building affordable housing. Most affordable housing is currently built through the inclusionary process and so if we want to see more affordable housing built, we should support these mixed-income projects.

1. What strategies and policies will you champion to increase affordable housing?

As mentioned above, I plan to champion increasing affordable housing through permitting new projects on city land, proposing residential infill to allow more middle-income housing types to be built, and by proposing an affordable housing overlay, similar to Cambridge, Massachusetts’ new policy that makes it easier for nonprofit affordable housing developers to build in the city.

1. How will you balance approving new housing developments with maximizing affordable units?

I recognize that we need a balance of regulated, affordable homes and market-rate homes for middle class families who may make too much to quality for affordable units but are still constrained by the city’s high housing prices. This balance should also be based on the best available evidence. If evidence emerges that a 20% inclusionary rate is too high to make projects profitable, then we should consider revising it.

**Policing in Santa Cruz**

The College Democrats at UCSC has previously written in support of getting cops off UCSC’s campus as the COLA strikes occurred in the beginning of 2020. You can read our full statement at [UCSCDems.com](http://ucscdems.com). After UCSC’s Black Student Union released demands to the UCSC Administration, the College Democrats at UCSC voted unanimously in support. Their demands included abolishing the UC Police Department at UCSC.

1. Do you support or oppose reducing the Santa Cruz Police Department’s budget and redistributing the funds to other city services?

 Check one: Support \_X\_\_\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_\_\_\_

* + If yes, how much of a budget reduction and what departments would you prioritize in receiving increased funding?

We need to be investing more in social services. I also believe that most of the funding for the police department related to responding to homelessness should be invested in social workers and mediators along with expanded mental health and substance abuse programs.

* + If no, what other reforms would you like to see enacted in the Santa Cruz Police Department?
1. What specific changes would you like to see enacted for the Santa Cruz Police Department?

I think that there are opportunities to change how we handle calls and the dispatcher service. Looking to models in Austin, TX, and Eugene, OR, we should have a 911 dispatcher ask if the caller is asking for police, fire, medics, or mental health experts and crisis workers. We can be smarter about how we respond to calls and reports. I am interested in seeing preliminary results from Berkeley’s recently approved pilot program to remove the police from traffic stops and parking endorsement. I will continue to seek community input into reform ideas or on policies of concern, including from the student population based on their experiences with SCPD on and off campus.

1. Do you support or oppose abolishing the Santa Cruz Police Department, in a way similar to Minneapolis? **Please elaborate.**

 Check one: Support \_\_\_\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_X\_\_\_

Although I lean in opposition to abolishing the Santa Cruz Police Department, I do think that we need to rethink our city’s safety strategy. I pledge to first pursue reform by continually seeking community input, examining policing data, and looking to alternative strategies for creating a safer city for all residents. If the evidence indicates that the police department is beyond reform, I will support abolition.

1. What do you envision for the future of our justice system?

We need a justice system that is truly equal for everyone. The system is currently too focused on punishment and should be more focused on rehabilitation and services that address the root causes of crime.

**COVID-19 Pandemic**

1. Do you support or oppose extending the eviction moratorium until the COVID-19 pandemic has ended? **Please elaborate.**

 Check one: Support \_\_\_X\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_\_\_\_

I have been a vocal supporter of local and statewide eviction moratoria since the first March shelter in place orders. I am concerned that the moratoria are only a stop gap and that many in the city will face eviction without an ability to pay back missed rent if they suffered a loss of income this year. We need to address that too.

1. Do you support or oppose erasing compounded rent debt accumulated through the COVID-19 pandemic? **Please elaborate.**

 Check one: Support \_X\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_\_\_\_

We need to continue to push our electeds in the Senate to approve additional stimulus and the $100 billion rent relief plan approved by the House of Representatives.

1. Do you support or oppose canceling rent during the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic? **Please elaborate.**

 Check one: Support \_\_\_X\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_\_\_\_

Renters need assistance.

1. What specific COVID relief policies/packages to students are you in support of?

It is appalling that even prior to the pandemic-induced economic downtown that so many UCSC students face food insecurity and experience homelessness. We need to make sure that students have access to these basic needs and push the University to do better.

1. What policies and assistance do you support to expand our healthcare capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic?

As a member of city council, I will follow and promote local, state, and federal public health guidance on COVID-19. I will work to make sure that city services can be accessed with minimal risks to staff and those seeking the service.

1. How will you support community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent budget austerity?

I value and appreciate the expertise of the city staff and the sacrifices that they have already had to make as a result of the city budget shortfall. When making budgetary decisions, I will seek to avoid austerity decisions that postpone economic recovery.

**Homelessness**

1. What specific policy changes will you pursue to protect unhoused folks, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city should do more to provide shelter to those experiencing homelessness, at all times. Access to bathrooms and handwashing should always be widely available, and I support the city’s actions to make them more available since the beginning of the pandemic. I also will work to prevent more people from losing the safety and stability of housing by supporting tenants.

1. How will you work towards eliminating homelessness in Santa Cruz? What are previous examples of supporting our unhoused population?

I will work towards eliminating homelessness by providing more funding for social workers to better connect unhoused folks with shelter and services. I would look to the recommendations of the Community Advisory on Homelessness including improving the navigation center and also looking to best practices elsewhere like permanent supportive housing.

I support local organizations like Housing Matters.

1. Scenario: As a council member, there is a proposal to designate an overnight parking location for unhoused folks living in their vehicles. The location is close to a school and near residential zones, but does not violate any regulations. Some local residents meet with you and oppose the designation.
	* What do you tell them?

I would listen to the input of local residents, try to understand their concerns, and see what could be done to mitigate them.

* + Would you support or oppose the designation? What other factors might you consider? Please elaborate.

I would want to research alternative sites and if I felt confident that the location was the best site, I would support the designation. I would also try to get input from the folks living in vehicles. Other factors might include the size of the space and number of vehicles and what additional resources the city might need to supply.

1. Do you support or oppose a housing-first approach to address homelessness? **Please elaborate.**

 Check one: Support \_X\_\_\_\_\_ Oppose \_\_\_\_\_\_

The housing-first approach to addressing homelessness has been shown to be highly effective at reducing homelessness and is a cost-effective strategy for doing so.

**UCSC-Centered Issues**

The College Democrats at UCSC has previously heard from a County representative regarding the potential negative impacts of UCSC’s Long-Range Development Plan on the Santa Cruz community and housing. The plan includes preparing to increase enrollment up to 28,000 students by 2040.

1. Do you support or oppose UCSC’s long-range development plan (LRDP)?

I support the plan and the positive contributions of the University, its staff, and students, to the community. The University is an important part of the city’s cultural and economic base. Increasing enrollment would give more students an opportunity to learn to at UCSC. Furthermore, the continued success and growth of the UCs are critical to providing economic opportunity to thousands of Californians; for example, the UCSC First Generation Initiative notes that 42% of the incoming class in 2016 were first generation students. I believe that the negative impacts of housing can be mitigated if the city starts taking the housing crisis seriously and builds more. The University absolutely should also be pressured (or perhaps required by new state law) to provide more housing to students and staff at accessible prices.

* + If you do not, what actions or strategy would you take as a city council member to prevent the growth?
1. If city council elections must transition to district elections, how would you redistrict the UCSC campus? What considerations will you take into account in preparing for this possible future?

To comply with the California Voting Rights Act, the city should transition to district elections as soon as possible. I believe that districts should be determined by an outside body or consultant but should not be drawn to dilute the power of the student voting bloc.

**Social Justice**

1. What policies will you fight for in order to achieve greater racial justice in Santa Cruz? This issue spans across many issues we have asked about before, so we hope your answer is deep and nuanced as well.

I support the grassroots movement for racial justice and am grateful for the local activists who have been organizing recent rallies and campaigns to advance social justice causes in Santa Cruz. We need to make sure that Santa Cruz is truly an inclusive city for everyone, especially historically disenfranchised groups with equal access to city resources and a voice in policy decisions. We need policies so that the immigrant community feels welcomed and safe. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples continue to face greater barriers in housing, health care access, criminal justice, and economic opportunity. When making policy decisions, we need to include a racial equity lens in evaluating possible outcomes. At the statewide level, I support Prop 16 to repeal the ban on affirmative action.

1. What policy changes do you support that directly help transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks in Santa Cruz? How will you ensure your campaign is inclusive of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks?

As part of evaluating policy through an equity lens, I will seek out input from my transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming neighbors in Santa Cruz. I am proud to live in a state that recognizes non-binary as a gender identification and in a city with several well-known nonprofits that support transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks. Inclusion and equity are key principles of my campaign and I will always welcome feedback on local issues of importance from transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks.

1. What policies will you pursue locally to protect our climate? What work have you been involved with previously to protect our environment?

Our city is already being confronted with disasters connected with climate change, including wildfires, erosion, and sea level rise, and therefore we need ambitious plans to combat climate change. My priorities would include improving waste diversion, minimizing coastal habitat loss, and improving options to walk, bike, and take public transit. In-fill housing development and increasing density would also help reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions. I strongly support the city’s examination of socially vulnerable census blocks in assessing climate hazard zones and will continue to make sure that the worst impacts of climate change are not borne by the most economically vulnerable in our city.

I often write or call my representatives to support environmental legislation, I donate to a few environmental-focused non-profits, and have been involved in organizing trash clean-up events through my work.

\_\_\_Elizabeth Conlan\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_9/2/20\_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Name Date