



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **Abel Guillén**

Age: 43

Hometown: San Francisco Mission District

Lived in Oakland since: 1999

Education:

A product of local public schools, I was the first person in his family to graduate from college.

- Master's degree in public policy, UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy
- Bachelor's degree in sociology, UC Berkeley

Occupation: Oakland City Councilmember

Political experience:

I have served as an elected official in Oakland for the past 12 years:

- Oakland City Councilmember (2015-present)
- Peralta Community College District Trustee (2006-2014)

Notable affiliations:

I have been a member of the following organizations:

- League of Women Voters Oakland
- Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
- Diversity in Health Training Institute (boardmember)
- NAACP – Oakland Chapter
- People for the American Way
- California Latino Community College Trustees Association
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Alameda County
- Young Elected Officials Network
- Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club
- Human Rights Campaign
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- Cal Alumni Association
- California Latino School Boards Association
- East Bay Young Democrats (former officer)
- League of Women Voters
- Metropolitan Greater Oakland Democratic Club
- East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club

I currently serve on a number of regional agency and nonprofit boards, including:

- Association of Bay Area Governments, Executive Boardmember
- League of California Cities, Revenue and Taxation Committee
- League of California Cities. Latino Caucus. Boardmember

### ***1. What do you see as the greatest challenges when it comes to providing residents with a livable, affordable and safe community?***

I have worked very hard the last four years as Councilmember to help create a more vibrant, safer and equitable city. Under my watch, we have made great progress on tackling the toughest issues facing us, and I want to see this progress continue. Our challenges are many – fixing our streets and making them safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, growing our economy and housing stock for all income levels, and ensuring quality good-paying jobs.

I will continue the fight for clean, safe neighborhoods and the results our residents expect. Working with my constituents, I have hauled tons of illegally dumped garbage and worked by your side in neighborhood cleanups; poured 4,000,000 pounds of asphalt to fix our streets/potholes and made streets safer for pedestrians; repaired park bathrooms; installed hundreds of street lights and trees around San Antonio Park and Lake Merritt; improved our recreation centers; expanded library hours; secured funding for model "tiny homes;" and created nearly 2,000 new apartments (focusing on affordable housing) with union/local hire jobs. I will continue my campaign to scrub all neighborhoods of illegal dumping, blight and graffiti; improve safety and fair treatment for all Oaklanders; and pursue economic vitality while protecting our diversity and most vulnerable residents.

Among the top priorities facing Oakland and my district in the coming years are housing affordability and homelessness; public safety and economic vitality; and infrastructure improvements.

I authored the \$600 million affordable housing/infrastructure bond measure, passed by the voters to help slow displacement and rebuild our streets and crumbling public facilities.

I will continue to support the construction, rehabilitation and protection of more affordable housing, and cover more tenants under rent/eviction protections.

We need to build more housing for all income levels, including market-rate and affordable housing. During my time on the Council, we have more than 1,700 units of mixed-income housing currently coming online in my district.

The answer to homelessness is ultimately housing, especially supportive housing and permanent, affordable housing. While on the Council, we've funded two navigation centers with wraparound services, and will be opening a "cabin village" in my district to help homeless campers around Lake Merritt find safer temporary shelter, receive support services, and find permanent housing.

We need to find more resources to fix our crumbling city facilities, including our streets. One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is co-authoring Measure KK, passed overwhelmingly by the voters in November 2016, which will provide substantial funding to fix our streets and roads while also protecting existing affordable housing stock.

Illegal dumping represents a serious threat to the livability of our neighborhoods and the health of our residents, including young children trying to walk safely to school.

Public Safety and Economic Vitality: I have consistently voted to support public safety in our city. I have partnered with the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce and other community groups in my district to increase police foot patrols, clean up graffiti, and improve cleanliness in the Downtown and Chinatown.

Oakland development in the coming years must improve the jobs-housing balance. That's why I pushed to turn the lot at 1100 Broadway (the Key Building), which has been vacant for 30 years, into a new office tower. The thousands of people who will work in this much needed office building will fan out at lunchtime and in the evenings, and support surrounding small businesses throughout downtown and Chinatown neighborhoods in my district. This walkable, transit-friendly project will create 500 good-paying construction jobs and provide office space for approximately 1,700 new workers once it opens.

Fundamentally, the best way to improve Oakland's long-term business sustainability is expand the tax base by building much needed housing and supporting the development of office buildings. The Council has adopted a plan to build 17,000 new units of housing while protecting 17,000 residents from displacement.

Illegal dumping represents a serious citywide threat to the quality of our neighborhoods and the health of our residents. Illegal dumping is a problem about trash. It's also a problem of neighborhood blight and a public health-and-safety problem. I'm especially concerned about the dangers to our young children trying to walk safely to school every day.

I've been working with City staff and neighbors to address this issue in my district, and it is clear that fighting illegal dumping effectively requires an increase in funding, resources and attention – for street clean-up and for dumping education and prevention.

The neighborhoods I represent in Chinatown, San Antonio and Eastlake have been among of the areas hardest hit by illegal dumping, so I am very interested in getting equitable services focused on underserved neighborhoods.

Like affordable housing, illegal dumping is at a crisis point – and we're now treating it like that. This is not acceptable, and we will not tolerate it. I think the City's approach has changed, and is changing, to be more equitable in putting resources into fighting illegal dumping. To address residential sources of illegal dumping, we have established a free bulky pickup service that tenants can call to take away their large, unwanted items, rather than dumping them on the street. We are hiring five litter-enforcement technicians to work to

stem the tide of dumping from unscrupulous out-of-town contractors and have approved funding for two additional illegal dumping crews.

As Chair of the Council's finance committee, I've worked to ensure that the City's budget process is more inclusive and equitable in allocating our limited resources and services. Once allocated, I've pushed administrators and staff to see that those resources are deployed in an equitable manner. This includes illegal dumping hotspots as well as long-neglected street repairs and revitalization of parks in underserved neighborhoods and in District 2.

A broad coalition of neighbors asked for and I delivered funding for the hiring of five new litter-enforcement technicians and other measures to attack this problem. I pushed forward the funding for this beefed-up enforcement and for more City resources before the budget mid-cycle.

We added an extra illegal dumping crew and added "zone-based" illegal dumping pick-up that prioritizes the flatlands in Oakland without having to necessarily call it in for service. In all, we have added 12 new positions to address illegal dumping, and I am now in the process of monitoring implementation so that residents get the services they deserve.

## **2. What is the biggest opportunity for your district or city during the next four years?**

Our biggest problems can also become our biggest opportunities – particularly in the area of housing and transportation.

Gentrification can have direct and indirect impacts on virtually every neighborhood, for current renters as well as existing and prospective homeowners – and the sustainability of our small businesses and shopping districts too. My district includes several neighborhoods above and below I-580, with neighborhoods like East Lake, San Antonio and Chinatown perhaps the most at risk of displacement. We need to make sure that we take advantage of revitalizing neighborhoods in ways that allow existing residents to stay there and thrive.

Consistent with the Regional Housing Needs Assessment for Oakland, the City Council has adopted a plan to build 17,000 new units of housing while protecting 17,000 residents from displacement.

In our current housing crisis, "housing affordability" extends across the income spectrum, encompassing homeless residents, working families, seniors and families with young children, tenants and homeowners in one fashion or another. The effects of this crisis affect not only people with steep rents and mortgages but also the future of the local economy and the quality of life for the wider neighborhood in which they live.

We must remember who we're building homes for. As I look for push for a comprehensive vision for housing affordability that will protect our neighborhoods from displacement and energize our local economy, I am mindful of several key facts that should guide our collective response to this crisis.

Three out of five Oakland residents are tenants. Approximately two-thirds of Oakland renters pay more than the federally recommended maximum of 30% of their income on rent. A third of Oakland's 92,000 apartments – 32,000 units built after 1983 – are exempted from rent control because of Costa-Hawkins.

Roughly two-thirds of Oakland's senior households (nearly 20,000) are low-income, and a disproportionately large number of those are in communities of color. The disabled are also vulnerable to displacement: 23% of Oakland's population reported a disability, and nearly half of the population aged 65 or older is disabled.

Housing affordability is also measured by Average Median Income levels, with typical thresholds of 30%, 60% and 80% AMI used in negotiating the "level" of affordable rents and number of such units below those thresholds with developers. We need a mix of new and rehabbed units in these different tiers as well, along with shelter and transitional housing for homeless residents.

We need to continue a comprehensive strategy that provides a mix of market-rate and affordable units. The Regional Housing Needs Assessment indicates that Oakland needs to add an almost equal number of both types to its current housing stock.

I've supported increasing the number of both market-rate and affordable units as the best comprehensive, equitable strategy to provide more housing for all income levels that also improves the regional jobs-housing balance.

The City's Housing Element has identified 221 opportunity sites for 24,000 new housing units – along transit corridors. A longtime proponent of TOD to build higher-density, infill housing and strengthen transportation alternatives, I've also pursued funding and implementation of a complete-streets approach combined with impact fees and inclusionary rules to help fold a greater number of affordable units into market-rate development projects.

Oakland has some 20,000 vacant and underutilized lots. I'm pushing for measures that encourage housing construction on these lots. I cosponsored the vacant parcel tax (to incentivize use of vacant and blighted lots) that will be on the November 2018 ballot that will generate substantial funding to help address our homelessness needs and other neighborhood services like illegal dumping.

I've had success in getting developers in my district to provide affordable housing as part of several Community Benefits Agreements (2,000+ total units) – these are models for more housing opportunities that will provide homes and help our placemaking efforts to improve our neighborhoods.

I've encouraged legislation to foster more second units, especially near transit hubs and walkable to neighborhood shops. Oakland has 20,000 vacant and underutilized lots, so I'm pushing for measures (such as a vacant parcel tax) that encourage/underwrite construction of affordable housing.

In the areas of transportation and transit-related opportunities, I'm a vocal advocate for transit-oriented development and zoning changes to foster more TOD. I'm also implementing specific complete-streets projects in my district. As Councilmember, I try to take advantage of every opportunity to promote walking, biking and transit use, including transit-oriented development, support for pedestrian-oriented small businesses, and pedestrian and bike-lane improvements.

Traffic-calming improvements and the addition of bike lanes along the heavily trafficked lower Park Blvd. and Foothill Blvd. corridors (like those we installed on Grand Ave. and around several schools in District 2) are a top priority for me and for neighborhood residents. These projects are encompassed within my vision of creating more walkable, complete streets for all of our neighborhoods. The Lake Merritt protected bike lane should be completed soon, and I hope that it will be a step in the right direction to encourage more protected bike lanes and more active transportation throughout District 2 and the rest of Oakland.

The most meaningful public transportation investment in the East Bay in a generation –Bus Rapid Transit – is being built with segments in District 2 along 12th St. and International Blvd., with the support of my office to ensure good community relations with AC Transit's construction project. I've worked with local merchants to make BRT address both transit and commercial-district needs and opportunities.

In high-density areas with direct access to transit, we should reform existing parking requirements to include alternate forms of transportation to the traditional parking garage, such as bike, carsharing, BART and bus passes. We cannot continue to allow development projects to create unsustainable problems like substantially increased car traffic.

### ***3. Describe your commitment to your district or city leading up to your bid for office.***

I want to continue to fight for Oakland and our progressive ideals. It is a city and community that I love and respect – and it can do better. Like the city's diversity, Oakland's challenges are many and varied, but the solutions lie in our neighborhoods, our communities, our schools and our people.

I am the son of immigrants, who worked in union jobs for four decades, and am the first in my family to go to college – so I have lived the imperative of economic and educational opportunity.

I believe in public service, and the very real difference it can make in the lives of my fellow community members. I am committed to social justice and economic equity, demonstrated by my years of professional and political activity.

I have been an elected official in Oakland for the past 12 years as a community college trustee and Councilmember, and have worked professionally as a Financial Advisor for 15 years, raising more than \$3 billion to improve schools and colleges statewide.

As the chair of the Council's Finance and Management Committee, I know how to reach consensus on difficult fiscal decisions, balance a budget, and find the resources needed to get things done. I have forged effective relationships throughout our city and in the neighborhoods I represent that are essential for an effective, ethical leader who gets results that benefit our entire community.

My main policy goals are to address the housing affordability crisis, build additional affordable housing by implementing Measure KK that I co-authored, and improve our failing infrastructure by continuing to pave our streets roads and parks.

I also want to ensure that we stop displacement of current Oakland residents by protecting 17,000 existing units of housing by protecting tenants that are currently in naturally occurring affordable housing.

I have been an outspoken supporter of raising the minimum wage in Oakland, and have taken steps to strengthen the enforcement of and education about these local laws. I support the adoption of a prevailing wage ordinance. However, economic justice goes beyond wage laws.

We know that the opposite of poverty is not wealth – it is justice. We have a crisis of under-payment, not under-employment.

A fighter for the working class, I have pushed Oakland measures to prevent wage theft and establish PLA agreements for large development, and supported local workers in compensation disputes with local restaurant and hotel employers. I have demanded Project Labor Agreements and local-hire goals and job-training elements in major development projects, and secured a number of these elements in community benefit agreements with developers who are developing new buildings in my district.

I am a life-long advocate for unions and workers' rights. I have a long history of being involved in union efforts – I first began walking picket lines with my dad when I was very young and have endorsed workers' rights as an elected official today.

Before my elections as a Peralta Colleges Trustee and Oakland City Councilmember, I served as a boardmember for Familia Unidas, and have volunteered for several community organizations, including the Boys & Girls Club.

I am a strong advocate for volunteerism and civic engagement, such as organizing community clean-up days in my district. I supported the first-in-the-nation participatory budgeting process for District 2 residents to identify and vote for its community priorities for CDBG funds.

As a vital part of my Council office, I have bilingual staffmembers (Spanish and Cantonese) who work closely with community organizations to ensure non-English-speaking residents have lines of communication in their language as we address their concerns and ensure that their voice is heard.

As Councilmember, I've worked hard to provide leadership to our city and my community. I will keep focusing on solving our toughest challenges, while continuing to advocate for responsible, transparent fiscal management for the City of Oakland.

I've pushed for legislation and provided constituent services that support workers and their families – from affordable health care, educational access and affordable housing to economic/job growth, safe workplaces and workers' rights.

I have been a leader on national issues: initiating a ban on giving City contracts to companies involved in build Trump's border wall; spearheading Oakland's ban on plastic straws; authoring legislation against false advertising by anti-choice pregnancy centers.

At the same time, I deliver tangible results for my constituents that improve the quality of life and prospects for the future. I will continue my leadership to build more affordable housing, expand protections for tenants, and implement improvements that repair streets, sidewalks, sewers, and neighborhood parks and facilities, while fostering local economic growth, living-wage jobs and equitable, inclusive communities.

#### ***4. Silicon Valley and the Bay Area are at the center of global, technological advancement. How do you see technology's role in changing the lives of both longtime residents and transplants?***

Oakland is currently the workplace for more than 7,000 tech employees, with more than 20,000 Oakland residents working in tech companies located in other Bay Area cities. Oakland's growing tech sector includes more than 800 firms.

Although tech represents a small share of all Oakland jobs, these companies pay some of the highest wages. Leading the Bay Area, more than one-third (36%) of all tech jobs in Oakland are held by women.

In the wake of the Great Recession, the growth of the tech industry in Oakland can continue to help with the revival of our local economy and increase our tax revenue (which funds City services, programs and schools for all residents). Tech workers and companies can also bring new customers and sales for other small, non-tech businesses throughout Oakland.

However, there are also direct and indirect impacts on the community and its existing residents. Like other Bay Area cities, Oakland must take steps to avoid displacement of existing businesses and residents, and take steps to provide sufficient affordable housing for longtime residents as new people seek to make their home in our community. We must strive to integrate the tech industry into Oakland's rich culture and community.

One of the most diverse cities in the nation, Oakland must also continue to demand tech equity – access to tech jobs and the full range of financial and social benefits that our technology economy for everybody, including women and people of color.

The City's tech-sector strategy has two equity goals: increase the number of Oakland residents from underrepresented groups who start tech firms and the number of residents who can get jobs in the tech

sector. [Oakland Startup Network](#) for firms and [Tech Hire Oakland](#) for jobs, in partnership with private and nonprofit organizations, including the Peralta colleges.

These programs help address tech-related displacement by assisting Oakland women and people of color to get high-paying jobs in the industry and start their own local firms.

The City also helps tech-training organizations to locate in Oakland by finding them commercial space and introducing them to potential partnerships with local schools and youth-serving nonprofits. We ask new tech firms in Oakland to recruit talent from these organizations.

We will also continue to experience amazing new innovations in transportation mobility, energy, medicine and healthcare, clean air and water, communications and civic engagement, and other social aspects of our culture through technological advances. These changes will affect the buildings where we live and work, the streets and transportation networks that take us to and from these places, the parks and schools where we play and learn, the places where we shop and gather to share our lives. All of those changes must be equitable and inclusive – of all our families, all our neighborhoods and all of our community.

A 2016 report on “Cities and the Future of Technology” from the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology maintains that cities should use technology not only to upgrade and transform aging infrastructure, but to fundamentally reshape the way cities operate. Doing so will save energy, reduce traffic and congestion, create more sustainable and competitive cities, and bolster economic innovation and competitiveness.

“Smart cities” – communities that are building an infrastructure to continuously improve the collection, aggregation and use of data to improve the daily lives of their residents – are harnessing the growing data revolution, low-cost sensors and research collaborations, and doing so securely to protect public safety and individual privacy.

A cornerstone of smart cities is the emerging prevalence of low-cost sensors and wifi-enabled smart devices (from electricity meters to street lights and garbage bins to home appliances). Connecting these devices over the Internet and letting them talk to people, applications and other devices can provide local leaders with much better data about needs within the community and can present transformational new solutions to addressing those needs.

For example, cities can install a network of interactive sensors to collect real-time data on the city’s environment, infrastructure and activity for research and public use. This “array of things” urban-sensing essentially serves as a “fitness tracker” for the city, measuring factors that affect livability, such as climate, air quality and noise.

In the area of transportation, smart traffic management can help motorists face less traffic jams, and real-time data can tell them which areas are busy. Traffic lights could automatically adjust to reduce congestion. Monitoring of vehicles and pedestrian levels can optimize driving and walking routes. Transit riders can get real-time information about when a bus will arrive at a stop. Smart parking sensors could automatically alert drivers for free parking spaces, and street lights would turn on only when someone is approaching, saving a lot of energy.

Electric vehicles represent an opportunity to proactively serve existing residents and business owners and attract investment that will stimulate the local economy, all while creating a healthier and more sustainable region.

California has led the charge for electric vehicles with an ambitious strategy to put 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2025. That requires a local electric-charging grid, and we will need to update zoning and parking policies and local building codes accordingly. The City should also include more electric vehicles in local fleets by setting a target for the number of PEVs, and locating fleet charging stations with public-access stations for shared use.

We’re also very close to the full arrival of autonomous vehicles, with all their implications for our transportation network and community life.

In my district and on Oakland’s major streets, I’m interested in mobile sensors to street lighting, enabling us to know what bulbs have burned out. In time, this technology would give us the ability to brighten, dim and blink the lights, and gather environmental information. By being able to monitor and control each street light remotely, we can also reduce maintenance and operation costs – and put those savings into other programs.

Smart cities that contain smart energy grids will be a lot more efficient with their energy. A smart grid will be able to manage all the electric vehicles. It will be able to sense the amount of citizens present in time and location and adjust lighting accordingly. Smart grids will help community buildings also save a lot of energy and become more efficient.

In Oakland, where trash in our parks and illegal dumping on our streets is a big concern, we can even look to smart trash cans – granted a less sexy, but worthy use of technology. Cities around the world are purchasing garbage bins with wi-fi capability – and, in some cases, solar-powered trash compactors – that improve efficiency and help make overflowing receptacles a thing of the past (in my district, that’s a really big concern of residents around Lake Merritt and other Oakland parks). The data lets agencies plan more efficient collection routes where and when pickup is needed (Los Angeles, for example, has more than 300 of these cans.).

As an elected official, I’m also particularly interested in technological advances that help access and transparency – and improve civic engagement in community decision-making. In the past few years, the City has adopted an expanded open-data policy, making Oakland’s public data more accessible and useful to residents, and launched [data.oaklandnet.com](http://data.oaklandnet.com) as a platform for increased civic engagement and government transparency along with SpeakUp Oakland, a portal that facilitates public engagement on City projects and lets residents submit their ideas on improving Oakland. Apps, like Oak311 and Adopt-a-Drain, help City staff and residents collaborate more effectively and efficiently in reporting infrastructure problem spots and delivering public services.