

2018 Santa Clara County Supervisor Candidate Questionnaire

Silicon Valley at Home (SV@Home) is an affordable housing policy and advocacy organization working to ensure housing affordability for all who work and live in Silicon Valley. As a candidate running for office, we invite you to participate in a survey regarding affordable housing. Responses to this survey will be shared widely with community members, and SV@Home members and partner agencies.

Please complete the survey by September 17th, 2018

Candidate name

Susan Ellenberg

A. What are your housing priorities?

As County Supervisor, I will work to create more housing at every income level. My first priority would be to identify and facilitate the building of permanent, supportive housing for our County's nearly 7,000 individuals who are experiencing homelessness. An essential part of this work will entail meeting with community members to help them become "housing ready" so they will support projects in their own neighborhoods. For this type of housing to be successful, it will be imperative not only to build the infrastructure, but to ensure long term operating income streams and the placement of onsite, supportive services. Successful housing of people who are currently experiencing homelessness also means addressing related issues including 1) the delivery of mental and behavioral health services, 2) the processes by and circumstances under which people enter into and exit from the criminal justice system and 3) transitional services available to foster youth when they turn 18. My second priority would be to create innovative public/private partnerships to increase the supply of housing available to essential public sector workers whose incomes exceed the income cap that would qualify them for tax subsidized housing but who often still cannot afford to live within a reasonable commuting distance of their places of employment.

B. What are your thoughts about the potential for housing on the Civic Center site, the Fairgrounds, and the Reed Hillview Airport?

I believe that permanent, supportive and/or low income housing should be seriously considered at all three sites mentioned above. Lack of housing is arguably the greatest crisis facing our community and as the lead agency responsible for the welfare of our most vulnerable residents, the County should be stepping up as a model for "yes in my backyard" development. The underlying challenge in my mind is balance: these are all public spaces that should accrue to the public benefit and therefore, any housing must be considered not as a sole use of the property but in conjunction with other amenities or services that serve the broad community.

Addressing each site individually:

Civic Center: please see my OpEd published August 21, 2018 on this topic.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/08/21/5492770/>

Fairgrounds: The Fairgrounds, like other County owned property, should be utilized in a way that allows for the greatest public benefit. Over the past 25+ years, I have heard numerous proposals for the Fairgrounds, from Central Park-like settings to multi-use attraction areas. Clearly, no significant development has occurred on that property and it continues to be sorely under-utilized. I would support some supportive or workforce housing on that site, designed in a manner that complements other components of a community benefit master plan. Public transit around the Fairgrounds is currently inadequate, so housing there would have to be proposed in coordination with VTA's addition of service routes in that area to make housing practical for the population that might be eligible to live there.

Reid Hillview: Neighbors have opposed this municipal airport for decades, based both on its proximity to residential neighborhoods and related safety & noise concerns, and on the potential higher value of the land to a community that experiences a severe shortage of affordable housing. Questions I would need to have answered include how much revenue is currently associated with the use of R-H as a general aviation airport, flight school site and general business site. I also want to investigate further the challenges associated with closing the airport against the wishes of the FAA. Generally speaking, if the purposes served by R-H could all be housed at the South County airport there would be no compelling reason to maintain R-H. If even a small portion of that property was sold to private owners, the income from that sale could likely support extensive development on that site that would benefit the broad community, including an increased supply of affordable housing.

D. Do you support or oppose fast tracked or streamlined permitting of residential or mixed-use development in the County? Please explain your response.

I would support streamlined permitting of residential or mixed-use development in Santa Clara County. The permitting process, often unpredictable and extremely protracted, drives up the cost of building housing. Streamlining the process should eliminate unnecessary costs and barriers and facilitate development of innovative, affordable housing options. I would recommend that cities consider one-stop permitting or priority processing, including centralized services, checklists, reduced administrative procedures and fee caps for certain types of housing, either at or below market rate.

E. What do you think the County's housing role should be in the broader region?

Santa Clara County has been a model for other Counties in the state and across the nation in many respects, whether in creating a County-wide children's health insurance, opening the County's first Office of LGBTQ affairs, or requiring expedited testing of rape kits. We should demonstrate the same spirit of innovation and inclusivity with regard to addressing the region-wide affordable housing crisis. If we are successful in rendering homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring, I'm certain our policies and procedures will be adopted by other Counties in our region and then the state.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms