

**COUNCIL DISTRICT 4
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Nithya Raman

David Ryu

SOHA’s Board of Directors developed 35 questions and sent them to the two councilmember candidates. Here are their responses to each question, including a short description of the reasoning behind their response.



1 Do you support Proposition 15 on the November ballot that amends Proposition 13 by splitting the tax roll so commercial properties are taxed based on their actual present assessment value while residential properties, including apartment buildings, are excluded from change and remain taxed using current Proposition 13 rules?

YES – Reason: California is near the bottom of the United States in per-student spending. Passing Prop 15 will begin to repair depleted school budgets, including LAUSD’s.

YES – Reason: Prop 15 taxes unassessed values of commercial properties while affording residential properties protections that make living in California feasible and secures needed funding for schools.

2 Many commercial property sales retain previous owners in a small ownership position simply to avoid reassessment under Proposition 13 rules. Do you support an ordinance eliminating such tax-evasive practices when there is a new beneficial owner as an alternative to splitting Proposition 13 tax rolls (see prior question)?

NO – Reason: I’m aware of this loophole, but I worry about issues with enforcement and support Prop 15 as it stands.

NO – Reason: These kinds of fixes in the past have not remedied the issue at heart and have been navigated by attorney’s to find new workarounds.

3 Do you agree that the City of Los Angeles should first investigate all other means to provide ample housing in our communities before considering the possibility of up zoning single-family neighborhoods?

YES – Reason: My first priorities are placing new housing on transit corridors, city-owned lots, commercial zones, and high-traffic job centers.

YES – Reason: Unutilized density exists throughout the City. Local control can promote development in underdeveloped zones and target density toward appropriate locations without obliterating single-family neighborhoods.

4 Do you agree that housing bills introduced this year in the California Legislature, which SOHA opposed, unfairly rewarded developers without actually providing solutions to the affordable housing problem?

NEITHER – Reason: My opinions on the bills varied. I didn’t support SB50, and had questions about others that were unresolved before they were pulled.

YES – Reason: I opposed SB1120, 902, 1085, 899, AB725 and fought against SB50. We cannot give away the farm without substantive inclusion of affordable housing.

5 Senate Bill SB 902 was defeated in the State Legislature, but would have granted local jurisdictions, i.e., City Councils, the authority to rezone single-family neighborhoods to allow ten-unit apartment buildings. Would you have supported such a bill?

YES – Reason: This is a local control bill. I wouldn’t have supported this move for LA, but I believe municipalities should be able to do so.

NO – Reason: I opposed SB902 and all freebie zone changes. Had it passed I would have fought to ensure it was not used in CD4.

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6 Do you support legislation like Senate Bill SB 1120 that would have allowed the splitting of lots and the addition of numerous housing units per split lot as a means of addressing California's housing crisis?

YES – Reason: I had questions about rent control eligibility and fire zone construction loopholes, but appreciated that it would allow for more affordable housing types than currently.

NO – Reason: I vocally opposed SB 1120 and introduced a motion in opposition CF 20-0002-S101: <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/la-cityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=20-0002-S101>

7 Do you support the many bills currently being considered by the California Senate and Assembly that would (1) eliminate requirements for public hearings and input by legislating “by right” projects (i.e., without public review or approvals) and (2) eliminate requirements for projects to be publicly reviewed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

NEITHER – Reason: My opinion varies. I want to replace our current capricious process with coherent, neighborhood-based plans. If LA doesn't do this, state intervention will continue.

NO – Reason: I have and will continue to oppose the many pro-developer bills coming out of Sacramento that broadly overturn local zoning without proven benefits.

8 Do you support a California Constitutional Initiative granting the power to determine land use and zoning issues only to local jurisdictions (i.e., counties and cities) and not the state?

NO – Reason: Some municipalities in California have used zoning as a tool for racial and economic exclusion. I believe the state needs tools to prevent that.

YES – Reason: A qualified yes – the State should set goals and offer cities tools and incentives, but Sacramento absolutely must stop writing local zoning code.

9 Do you support continuing or increasing City of Los Angeles COVID-19 restrictions until sufficient scientifically based evidence indicates re-opening of businesses is safe?

YES – Reason: I spoke out against the city's aggressive reopening at the end of May, which caused a spike that killed residents and devastated businesses.

YES – Reason: I support continuing to follow the Los Angeles County Department of Health directives on how to open safely with our residents and businesses in mind.

10 California restricts Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs or “granny flats”) to a maximum of 1,250 square feet while the City of Los Angeles restricts such ADUs to 1,200 square feet. Do you support the City of Los Angeles allowing the larger 1,250-square-foot ADUs in R-1 single-family neighborhoods to provide statewide consistency?

YES – Reason: This strikes me as a reasonable proposal.

NO – Reason: I support local land use authority to tailor land use regulations that are best suited for LA's unique and numerous neighborhoods, including hillside communities.

11 The Los Angeles City Council and Mayor's office have been exceptionally opaque in a number of major contract negotiations, for example the most recent labor agreements with the police and firefighter unions. Do you support a Council motion requiring any new contract with employees and particularly with unions to be available for public comment in advance of signing, giving the public time to comment on the contracts and the City time to incorporate comments?

YES – Reason: I've spoken against the Council's closed-door negotiations on huge salary increases that put LA in the red last November, long before the pandemic.

YES – Reason: I support a transparent and open government, including labor contracting; I voted against LADWP contract raises based on lack of transparency and review.

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12	Do you support the LA 2020 Commission's recommendation to establish a transparent and independent commission to review and analyze the City of Los Angeles' two pension plans (LACERS and LAFPP) and their budget impacts over the next ten years, using realistic market-based assumptions?	YES – Reason: I'm deeply concerned by the effect our massive pension liabilities will have on workers, residents, and public services. I support further review.	YES – Reason: Yes, we need fiscal responsibility with rational and realistic investment projections that protect our past, current, and future employees as well as our residents.
13	Do you agree with the Los Angeles City Council's July 2020 budget reduction for the LAPD?	YES – Reason: Long term I would also like to see more funds moved to support trained, unarmed response for mental health crises, homeless encampments, and traffic enforcement.	YES – Reason: During the COVID-19 pandemic it was unacceptable that we were asking social services departments to take 10% cuts while increasing the PD budget.
14	Many residents worry that even a fully budgeted LAPD is already understaffed and not able to keep the City of Los Angeles safe. Do you support further budget reductions and transfers of some LAPD responsibilities to other organizations?	YES – Reason: Only 8% of LAPD calls involve violence. Shifting to unarmed response would create a more efficient, effective system. I don't seek safety funding reductions overall.	YES – Reason: Reimagining public safety by transferring nonviolent responses to civilian/non-armed personnel will result in increased public safety and better LAPD response to violent crimes.
15	Do you support such concepts as the Community Safety Partnership, placing specially-trained LAPD officers in five-year assignments to a specific area, so they can become part of the community and develop relationships with the people they serve?	NEITHER – Reason: I do believe public safety response should be neighborhood-based and would support versions of this program, but not the continued emphasis on armed officers.	YES – Reason: Community policing shows proven results because relationships are built between law enforcement and communities. Law enforcement can learn and integrate into neighborhoods they service.
16	The City of Los Angeles is struggling with budget reductions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you support maintaining full funding for city departments such as street services to ensure that they have sufficient funding to perform street repairs, tree maintenance, and other essential services?	YES – Reason: Deferred maintenance now leads to increased costs later, as happened after the last recession. I've supported pursuing a number of revenue-generating options.	YES – Reason: Deferred maintenance is more costly. Maintaining robust, proactive, and preventive services not only provides living wage jobs and worker retention but is most cost effective.
17	The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is deciding on final concepts for the Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project in early 2021. Do you support Metro's two fully underground heavy rail subway concepts running under either Van Nuys or Sepulveda Boulevards?	YES – Reason: I think options HRT1 and HRT2 are far preferable to the two above-ground options proposed, both for riders and nearby residents.	YES – Reason: I've championed the community's position that the project should be undergrounded to protect businesses and residences and be equitable with transit projects on the Westside.

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18	Do you oppose Metro's two transit concepts running elevated above Sepulveda Boulevard in Sherman Oaks or Van Nuys and oppose any other potential Sepulveda Pass Transit Project concept running elevated above any street (not the 405 freeway) in the Valley?	YES – Reason: I don't believe the noise, property, and construction impacts are worth the difference in cost.	YES – Reason: Yes, transit projects must be responsive to the communities they serve and have the least amount of impact on businesses and residences.
19	Metro is also evaluating additional innovative Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project concepts proposed by industry teams, such a monorail above the 405 median. Do you support Metro's selection of such concepts, if Metro decides they are viable and affordable?	NEITHER – Reason: I can't commit to support without seeing the Metro-approved plans, but I'm open to exploring all options!	YES – Reason: All viable options should at the very least be evaluated to determine feasibility and impacts to communities. It also serves as a useful comparison.
20	Do you support the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association fight to ensure the Valley gets its fair share of public transit?	YES – Reason: I very strongly believe in fair transit allocation for the Valley, which has been marginalized in many of the city's large-scale plans!	YES – Reason: I support and will fight for the Valley's fair share of public transit including Measure M Orange Line Improvements and fully underground Sepulveda Pass Line.
21	Do you oppose Metro's recent Mobility and Affordability Plan's deferral of the Valley-to-Westside-to-LAX Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project for at least six months to help meet recent budget reductions?	YES – Reason: Metro cuts to service and transportation planning will continue to weaken a transit system already suffering from declining ridership.	YES – Reason: I will fight to ensure Metro does not delay the Project and that it's considered essential. Metro is prohibited by ordinance from reprioritizing projects.
22	Do you commit to keep, maintain, and effectively staff a Sherman Oaks CD4 Field Office throughout your tenure?	YES – Reason: Sherman Oaks is the largest part of the district! I'll put my largest Field Office there, and work to retain talented staff with local expertise.	YES – Reason: Sherman Oaks occupies 1/3 of the district geographically and by population. I have an office in SO and will keep it open throughout my tenure.
23	As a councilmember who will face decisions on issues that have been voted on by an elected Neighborhood Council (NC), would you support the local NC recommendation regardless of your personal or professional point of view on the issue?	NO – Reason: Projects often affect adjacent neighborhood councils that may disagree, so I can't commit to unilateral support for NC positions, but would always strongly consider them.	NO – Reason: I'm the only Councilmember to have served on an NC. However, I maintain my right to disagree if recommendations do not align with the community.
24	Do you commit to maintain full transparency for CD4 discretionary fund distributions and continue the resident-based CD4 Discretionary Funds Task Force that makes recommendations on discretionary fund expenditures to the councilmember?	YES – Reason: I pledge to maintain full transparency on every expenditure and action I and my office consider.	YES – Reason: With community collaboration, I am proud to have brought this concept to fruition and commit to continuing its operation and the substantive work they do.

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25	Do you support amending the City Charter to remove Section 245(e) to prevent a single individual councilmember from overriding planning department decisions?	YES – Reason: Consolidating planning power in the hands of single councilmembers has lead to extraordinary corruption. Overrides should at least go to full Council vote.	YES – Reason: I’m the author of this motion which is an extension of my Anti-Corruption platform and legislation to end pay-to-play politics in land use decisions.
26	Do you commit to work with the Coalition of Businesses and Residents Associations (COBRA) to ensure maintaining the viability and success of small businesses on Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks and providing all necessary city resources during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?	YES – Reason: I’m putting forward small business relief plans in my campaign. I look forward to partnering with COBRA on implementing them!	YES – Reason: I have a productive relationship with COBRA. Now more than ever, through the pandemic, we must support our local businesses, in particular hard-hit restaurants.
27	Do you support permanent relaxation or change of City of Los Angeles rules to permit more outdoor seating for restaurants beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period?	YES – Reason: In specific cases outdoor dining has led to impassable sidewalks for strollers and wheelchairs, but overall I support much more outdoor seating.	YES – Reason: Yes, in order to help our small businesses recover through COVID, I introduced a motion to make LA’s AL Fresco dining program permanent.
28	Do you support a road diet (narrowing or eliminating automobile lanes) on Ventura Boulevard to make way for express bus lanes and/or bicycle lanes?	YES – Reason: I support the guidelines put forward by Mobility Plan 2035, which calls for expanded bike and transit access on Ventura Boulevard.	NEITHER – Reason: I have not received a proposal on this concept and do not yet have any information from which to develop a support or oppose position.
29	Do you commit to conduct major community outreach for any proposed homeless housing projects before moving forward on these projects?	YES – Reason: My campaign is built on community outreach, and will define my administration. I’ll govern in public and hold multiple meetings for all projects.	YES – Reason: I’ve proven my commitment to robust outreach. I know the importance of community support and coalition building in finding locations for projects like Mercy Housing.
30	Do you support increased City of Los Angeles funding to significantly boost mental health and drug addiction treatment, especially among the homeless population?	YES – Reason: Funding treatment programs is essential for addressing homelessness. I’ve centered increased services in my homelessness and public safety policies.	YES – Reason: The City and County need to increase our social service investments to bring true and proper crisis response to our streets.
31	Do you commit to sponsor a feasibility study for a trolley service along Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks and Studio City to help reduce traffic congestion and enhance public mobility?	NEITHER – Reason: I know a trolley has been discussed for decades, and I’d like to hear a full proposal. Let’s talk about it!	YES – Reason: If the community supports analysis of such a proposal this is something Discretionary Funds could potentially be allocated towards.

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32	Do you commit to sponsor an ordinance requiring at least 50 percent of parking revenue from Sherman Oaks parking meters and garages be retained in a fund to pay for traffic mitigation measures in Sherman Oaks?	NEITHER – Reason: This kind of ordinance seems very reasonable, but I'd like to learn more about current funding allocations before committing.	YES – Reason: I have already authored legislation that seeks to do just that as was the case a decade ago prior to the 2008 recession.
33	Do you commit to sponsor a charter amendment in the next available election cycle requiring the City of Los Angeles to pass at least three-year balanced budgets?	NO – Reason: City Hall budget-making is often based on magical thinking. I'd rather focus on planning a realistic annual budget than speculate on revenue years in advance.	NO – Reason: I am committed to budget transparency and fiscal prudence. However, the experts I've talked to do not think this proposal will address the problem.
34	Do you commit to sponsor a charter amendment in the next available election cycle requiring the City of Los Angeles to fully fund its two pension plans over a period such as twenty years with no additional and/or separate tax increases?	NEITHER – Reason: Our pension liabilities aren't sustainable, and reforms have not been effective. A charter amendment may be necessary, but I'd like to do outreach before committing.	NO – Reason: This proposal could decimate city services, leading to crumbling infrastructure, increased homelessness, and reduced public safety.
35	Do you commit to sponsor a charter amendment in the next available election cycle requiring the City of Los Angeles to fully fund (from its General Fund with no additional and/or separate tax increases) the repair and maintenance of our streets and sidewalks over a stated period such as twenty years?	NEITHER – Reason: The Willits settlement will have to be funded somehow, and I'm not against a charter amendment. But I'd like to explore all paths before committing.	NO – Reason: Further constraining budget flexibility is a risk for LA's financial health and limits our ability to respond to the public's needs.

DO NOT VOTE UNTIL...

Do not cast your vote for the upcoming November 3 election until after our October Zoom Community Meeting on Wednesday evening, October 21, 2020. At that meeting, there will be a debate to determine who will be the Los Angeles City Councilmember for our Community for the next four years. Will it be the current Councilmember David Ryu or Nithya Raman? See the debate on October 21, make a decision and mail your ballot the next day.

This City Council race probably has the most direct impact on your neighborhood and our Community.