

College Democrats at UCSC
Santa Cruz City Council Candidate Questionnaire

All questionnaires will be published publicly on the UCSCDems.com website

Must be completed and submitted by August 30th, 2020

Send completed, by email, to BlueSlugs@gmail.com

1. CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

- Elected Office You Seek: Santa Cruz City Council
- Candidate Name: Maria Cadenas
- Occupation/Profession: Executive Director/Santa Cruz Community Ventures
- Email address (this is our preferred manner of communication unless you specify otherwise): maria@mariacadenas.com
- Home/Office Phone: 831.421.1352
- Cell Phone: 831.421.1352
- Incumbent: _____ Yes ___X___ No
- Former campaigns for elected office, and their outcomes:
CA State Senate District 17, was third place and received 21% of the vote
- Appointed offices currently/formerly appointed to:
Secretary of the Podiatric Medical Board of California, Department of Consumer Affairs
- Organizations you are a member of:
Kitchen Table Advisors (Steering Committee Member)
Women's Radio Collective (Member, co-host of Breakfast in Bed at KZSC)

2. DEMOCRATIC AFFILIATION

- Approximate number of years as a registered Democrat? ___X___ Santa Cruz County _____ Elsewhere
- Describe your involvement with the Democratic Party at the Local, State or National level over the last few years.
volunteer, donor, and member

3. INFORMATIONAL QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. What are your main campaign priorities?

These are difficult times for the City of Santa Cruz. It is imperative that we address the budget shortfall and work to ensure essential services are provided to our residents, especially the most vulnerable. Our main focus should be a close review and monitoring of our city budget, both in expenses and revenues, and in alignment to moving us to a more equitable future. I have worked closely with global and local institutions, including during turnaround times that required difficult budget decisions. This can be done with a thoughtful approach and focus on an equitable framework and analysis to our policy to address disparities and ensure all can thrive.

In addition to managing the immediate budget shortfall, we must look at ways to rebuild and strengthen our recovery in ways that set the stage for a stronger Santa Cruz. This includes a focus on creating affordable housing and looking at possible industry development and support of local economic models, that are centered on investment in local business development of women and BIPOC owned businesses.

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

Due to our current pandemic and fire response, our policy priorities must lie in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our residents, including providing essential services. A key part of this is addressing our housing crisis, which includes a review of land use policies, vehicles to increase revenue towards affordable housing development, and a review commission appointment process to ensure a more representative government.

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.

We must not let perfection stand in the way of projects that will move us in the direction to address our housing needs, especially in the need for affordable housing units. Most importantly, we must ensure that our Objective Measures, Housing Element, and General Plan all reflect the values and interest of the community, as these will directly impact the projects as they move towards approval.

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

While there is no single solution to the housing crisis we are facing, I am a strong advocate of affordable housing. I have had the privilege to work on the development of housing for children ageing out of foster care and to serve on the Board of Directors for New Way Homes. I believe that we must retain all affordable housing we currently have and ensure that tenants are protected. In addition, we need to 1) build housing across all income levels in ways that ensure that we are determining our housing/job balance to look at housing “fit” in our planning efforts so that the people who work here can live here. 2) work with regional partners to increase funding for housing development from the state, as well as accountability to ensure we can meet our ELI/LI and RHNA goals. And 3) work to identify possible revenue vehicles that can further aid housing development. We must also ensure that density is not solely directed into low-income and communities of color.

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

Housing development is not easy, especially for affordable housing projects. We must review our inclusionary policies and help utilize the housing density bonus of new development projects. It is imperative that we also work closely with nonprofit developers and find ways to help with the capital mix. We must also review our zoning laws and find ways to leverage our public land to support affordable housing. This includes review of downtown surface parking lots.

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](https://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 _____ Oppose _____

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

The discussion around Police budgets is centered around the need to address systems that disproportionately harm our communities of color and low-income individuals, including the unhoused. The reality is that the police, as a system, carries vastly different experiences based on race and class. As such, we must address the system itself, in addition to budget allocations which are a reflection of our values and priorities. Any budget reduction will need to be tied to an investment in alternative programs that address the need for safety and justice in ways that are centered on equity and are held accountable to racial and class disparities.

- If no, what other reforms would you like to see enacted in the Santa Cruz Police Department?

2. What specific changes would you like to see enacted for the Santa Cruz Police Department?

We will not find peace and safety through continual criminalization. I'm currently reviewing policies, structures, and the use of data to better. I look forward to working with all stakeholders as we determine the next step.

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

Check one: Support X Oppose

While our city, and our police budget, is much smaller than Minneapolis. The lived experience of BIPOC, unhoused, and low-income members of our community paint a picture of concern. I'm open to having a conversation with community members, city leaders, police, and other stakeholders to imagine a system of safety, justice, and community wellbeing centered around equity and held accountable to those standards.

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

Our justice system is not perfect. However, it is one in which money has too much say on the results you get and where we have seen the undue harm it causes to BIPOC and low-income communities. Furthermore, the system relies too heavily on criminalization and does not adequately address root causes of issues facing communities, including poverty. Similarly, there is significant concern around the increased use and reliance of technology, such as facial recognition. To achieve a more equitable system we must move away from bail, fees, and fines. Look closely at diversion programs that are preventative in nature and provide social service assistance, including recovery, as alternatives to punishment and arrests.

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 _____ Oppose _____

We are living through a health emergency like we have never experienced before. Ensuring housing stability is critical to our public health at this time. As Executive Director of Santa Cruz Community Ventures we oversaw volunteer tax preparation for low-income workers in the County and saw first hand the rent burden experienced by our residents, including many self-employed individuals. Many of them have lost their wages and do not have enough savings to navigate this pandemic. Eviction moratoriums are a necessary tool we must use to keep people housed as part of our public health response. And we must advocate the state and federal government for support to provide relief for homeowners and renters alike to ease the economic cliff that delayed rents and no-payback periods will create. I am open to reviewing options and listening to stakeholders to determine if and what may be needed moving forward.

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

Check one: Support _____ Oppose _____

The state and federal government must do all it can to ease the economic impact on renters and homeowners caused by the pandemic. At minimum there should be an extended repayment period offered.

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

Check one: Support _____ Oppose _____

I support canceling rent for tenants and mortgage payments for homeowners during the pandemic as a federal and state policy, especially for those that have lost wages and income.

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

I support the cancellation of student debt. I'm open to having discussions on additional programs and ways to support students.

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

All essential workers deserve hazard pay and to be provided with needed PPE. All costs associated with COVID-19 care, including testing and isolation should be covered.

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

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted BIPOC and low-income communities, as well as women. As such our recovery should disproportionately focus on aiding these same communities. From childcare, business loans, and proportional budget cuts to ensure that basic needs are properly addressed.

Homelessness

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

We must move away from criminalization of our unhoused neighbors. Santa Cruz has a disproportionate number of unhoused individuals, even as compared to similar cities in the central coast. Our coordination with the County is critical in addressing our unhoused population.

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

Finding a solution that ensures our unhoused population has safe housing and needed wraparound services is important, and the only way to achieve this is in partnership with the County, neighboring cities, and the state. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in partnership, and ensure that no City carries an undue burden.

3. 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?

Any solution must be considered as part of a longer term strategy to ensure our community members are housed and have access to needed services. Engaging with stakeholders is critical to inform any decision, and while no solution is perfect, we must ensure that public health and safety are prioritized.

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

We must review how this decision fits into a longer term solution, in partnership with the County. This includes wrap-around services.

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

Check one: Support _____ Oppose _____

Different studies across the world have proven that housing-first works.

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)?

UCSC is a critical member of our community, and their decisions, including increase in student population have a direct impact in the city's housing, water, and services. I look forward to working with UCSC, UC Regents, and other stakeholders to ensure that these issues are addressed and accounted for.

- If you do not, what actions or strategy would you take as a city council member to prevent the growth?
2. 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?

District

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 have had the privilege to be part of a the Mosaic Partnership initiative in the City of Milwaukee, focused on building structures to address individual and structural racism in the city, as well as being part of a national initiative around Racial Equity in philanthropy, and work to transform several agencies and boards to create models to change culture and programing to address racial justice. I have also served on the Steering Committee for CORE Steering committee. I would be honored to bring that experience and learn from colleagues to discuss ways to look at City Policy and procedures to ensure that the diverse lived experiences of our residents inform city decisions and future. As a single mom, Executive Director of Santa Cruz Community Ventures, a Latina, and a proud resident of Santa Cruz for almost ten years, this is personal to me.

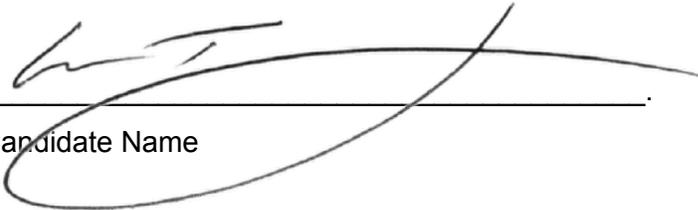
The County's vote to make racism a public health crisis is a first step that acknowledges its impact in our ability to thrive. Similar steps should be taken by the city, and then move to leverage the CORE efforts to collect and monitor data to ensure we are moving in the right direction. This includes efforts to increase representation and diversity of our appointed and elected officials, including commission make up. In addition, we should look at our procurement and vendor policies, as well as our small business support to ensure that we prioritize investment in BIPOC and women-owned businesses.

2. 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 a Lesbian and someone that has worked for over 20 years towards LGBTQ equality, I am proud of the leadership Santa Cruz has taken on this issue. And there is room to continue efforts towards greater inclusivity.

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

The number one way to reduce Santa Cruz City's carbon footprint is through heating electrification. In the past year, the city council has set an ordinance requiring all electric for new construction. What we need next, in order to reduce our city's carbon footprint is to help all the existing buildings (residential and commercial) switch to heating electrification. This could come through incentive programs as well as education and outreach.



Candidate Name

08/30/2020

Date