

Lori McDonnell

Candidate for: Pacific Grove City Council

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Occupation: Clinical Research Coordinator

Years in the Area: 3

Education: Masters in Psychology (Human Factors and Industrial/Organizational)

HOUSING POLICY

What is your position on affordable housing? Please be specific with regards to policies you support or oppose

Affordable housing is a critical issue for our city. With soaring housing costs, it is essential that we find creative solutions to ensure our residents and workers are able to find affordable places to live. I support development of mixed-use and multi-family units, including ADUs. I also believe we need to identify programs that help ensure residents who are currently housed remain housed so they do not become new additions to our homeless population.

Do you support modifying city policies or regulations to make it easier and cheaper to build housing? If so, what specific policy changes do you support?

Yes, I support streamlining the process for getting affordable housing built in a timely manner. One change I would support is rezoning and needed to create allowances for more multi-family units on single-family lots and increased density allowances on a case-by-case basis to enable the development of new affordable-housing units.

Do you support requiring that “inclusionary housing” units be made permanently affordable, even upon resale? If not, please explain.

Yes, units that are initially rented or sold as inclusionary should remain that way for the life of the property to ensure that they remain a source of affordable housing. Homeowners, developers, and property managers should not be able to profit by selling or renting an affordable unit at market-rate and taking it out of the affordable housing inventory.

Do you support requiring developers of hospitality, commercial and industrial projects that significantly increase demand for already scarce housing resources to pay housing impact fees to finance workforce housing or to build such housing themselves?

Yes, a good way to ensure that housing is built to house the growing labor force is to tie housing requirements to large commercial and hospitality developments. Without this type of solution, we are unlikely to have developers willing to build the affordable housing units required to house the employees of these developments.

How should local governments finance affordable housing?

I would propose seeking government grants that support development of affordable housing projects designated to help our current local residents, without requiring that the units be made available to people outside of our city who wants to move here.

Throughout Monterey County, local governments have approved ~21,000 single family homes that haven't been built, and another ~13,000 are proposed. The median home price in Monterey County is ~\$850,000. Do you support adding more single family homes to the unbuilt pipeline or zoning for more affordable apartments, condominiums, and townhouses?

I support a combination of single-family homes and zoning for more affordable apartments, condominiums, and townhouses. Multi-family units are essential to enable us to provide housing options to our local workers and families who do not earn enough to compete in the current real estate and rental markets. A combination of housing options is needed to ensure that the people who work to provide services to the city, residents, and tourists are able to afford to live in the community where they work. This is not only good for families but is a critical aspect of environmental sustainability and traffic management as well. Pacific Grove has done a great job of integrating single- and multi-family units within neighborhoods.

What other housing policies do you support or oppose?

Additional options I support include ADUs, adding more housing above businesses as applicable, and conversion of single-family homes into multi-unit homes.

WATER POLICY

What specific proposals do you support to ensure your community can meet its water demands without increasing the overdraft of the County's groundwater aquifers or violating the SWRCB's Cease and Desist Order regarding taking water from the Carmel River?

There are many sustainable options now for increasing permeability of our surfaces so water absorbs into the ground rather than washing away, and we need to explore these options and educate the public on best ways to integrate these techniques in their own homes. The most viable current option for increasing our water supply appears to be the Monterey One recycled water program which enables us to capture waste and storm water, treat it, and recycle it into the groundwater basin.

For Peninsula Candidates:

Do you support expansion of Pure Water Monterey as an alternative to building the desalination plant approved by the CPUC in 2018 but now stalled before the Coastal Commission? Why or why not? On what estimate of water demand is your position based, the estimate made by MPWMD or by Cal-Am? If you support the Cal-Am

desalination project, how large should it be? Who should pay for the excess capacity from the desalination project until demand materializes for its water, Cal-Am shareholders, business ratepayers, or residential ratepayers?

Yes, I would support expansion of Pure Water Monterey rather than desalination at this time because the cost of desalination does not currently make it a feasible option, while recycling waste and storm water takes a source that would normally be wasted and turns it into clean water that can restore our groundwater basin and provide a new water source to our cities. MPWMD estimates are likely to be more reliable than Cal-Am's.

GROWTH POLICIES

Do you support the creation of “urban growth boundaries” or expansion of the existing boundary as a way to prevent urban sprawl, and to insure that future growth is compact, efficient, and protective of the environment? If not, what measures would you support to prevent urban sprawl? If yes, will you sponsor an urban growth boundary in the upcoming year, and make it one of your top three priorities?

I support urban growth boundaries as a way to ensure that future growth is compact, efficient, and protective of the environment by creating climate-smart growth, such as mixed-use and multi-family unit neighborhoods. Reducing urban sprawl protects the environment as well as human well-being due to the health benefits associated with access to open spaces. Building more intelligently within a smaller boundary reduces the costs associated with sprawl, including the need to build new roads and extend sewage, water, electrical, and transportation services. Having more walkable and centrally planned communities helps to reduce traffic and pollution, reduce wildfire risk, and enhance sense of community. The need to expend housing within more compact cities also sparks creative solutions to the housing needs of the community that are more environmentally friendly and cost-effective. Because Pacific Grove is bounded by surrounding cities and our coast, there is little room for sprawl, so it is critical that we look to solutions already tested and found to be successful in cities that are thriving with their urban growth boundaries. I fully support preventing sprawl into our open spaces and will make this a top priority of my service.

Poorly planned, non-infill commercial developments and hotels create more trips and additional vehicle miles traveled on already overcrowded roads and highways. Both residents and visitors pay the price of delay and increased pollution. What specific traffic congestion relief solutions do you support?

Most of the traffic challenges for Pacific Grove come when entering and exiting the city, as there are so few ways in and out of the city through Monterey. The narrow streets of Pacific Grove leave few options for improving traffic flow, and roundabouts are likely not to be a viable alternative due to our narrow streets. The best ways to reduce traffic in Pacific Grove would be to make it more walkable with consistent sidewalks throughout

the city and to provide better access to public transportation that provides viable routes from where people live to where they work and shop are needed. This could be beneficial to the elderly who have less mobility or access to transportation and have trouble getting to appointments and running errands.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

Do you support roundabouts on Highway 68 and other roads? What other transportation policies or practices have you seen that local governments should incorporate?

Roundabouts can be a great traffic management alternative in areas where there is enough space to implement them. While there are very few viable options within the city of Pacific Grove, the roundabout at the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 68 is a good example of how they can be utilized to improve traffic flow.

CANDIDATE PRIORITIES

If you are elected, what will be your top three priorities?

(1) Work to ensure we honor our stewardship of our nature, wildlife, and protected marine environment. I want to ensure we are always in compliance with the wildlife protections and our city ordinances that are designed to protect the ecological resources in our city. When we are good stewards of our natural environment, it draws tourists who support our businesses, and this in turn brings the financial resources to support our community needs and city services. We sell our natural beauty in our advertisements for our city, and I believe it is in our best interest to protect it as the valuable asset that it is.

(2) Addressing affordable housing and homelessness. As a renter myself, I am keenly aware of the challenges people face in keeping up with rising expenses, so it is important that we find solutions to keep our current residents housed.

(3) Ensuring our residents are heard and their input is utilized when making city decisions. We need to tap into our community wisdom and utilize the advice of our volunteers and committees to help find the best solutions to our challenges and ensure that city decisions reflect the needs of the community and the environment.

What land use policies would you champion for the community?

I would champion integrating more multifamily and mixed-use dwellings in our community and prevent expansion into our open spaces. Pacific Grove has done a great job of integrating single and multifamily homes within neighborhoods and housing above businesses. I believe that exploring new opportunities for these types of units as well as ADUs would help address our housing needs and meet our state-mandated.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

What accomplishments in your career or public service are you most proud of?

Development of a Facilitation Training manual as a culmination of our research project at NASA that teaches trainers how to improve team communication and debriefing in the aviation and space industry and went on to be used in the medical field.

Volunteering in a Special Education classroom in college, where I taught a student with Down's Syndrome to tie his shoes rather than just tying them for him. He was so proud of his new ability that he went around tying everyone's shoes. It was a special moment because of how much it empowered him and brought him joy, and this has been a driving force for my goal to empower others through education and training.

Experience

Almost 30 years of experience running research studies and developing training, including 18 years in aviation/space research at NASA and 10 years in medical research at the Veterans Administration and Stanford. Served as newsletter editor, treasurer, then president of the Association for Aviation Psychology. Currently volunteering with a Monterey Audubon Society program that monitors black oystercatchers and assisting Bay Net docents in monitoring our harbor seals.