

The Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club Questionnaire for November 2020

Dear Candidates and Ballot Measure Representatives,

Congratulations on declaring your candidacy for office or your preferred ballot measure position. The Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club invites you to get to know us a little better as we plan our endorsements for the November 2020 election. Your participation in our Club's questionnaire will allow our Membership to better understand who you are, what you stand for, and what you plan to accomplish if you are elected to office or your ballot position is successful.

There are three parts to our questionnaire, plus additional questions for individual offices: Part 1 is a series of short-answer questions, with a 150-word limit on answers. Part 2 is a series of Yes or No questions covering a broad set of issues. Part 3 covers whom you have endorsed for office currently and in the past.

(Representatives of ballot measure positions only need to answer questions pertaining to ballot measures.)

Candidates, please email your answers to Edward Wright, our Vice President of Political Affairs, at pac@milklub.org and to correspondent@milklub.org no later than July 23rd.

In addition to this questionnaire, we invite you to participate in a recorded video interview on Zoom with Club leadership on either July 25th or July 26th. This virtual interview replaces the typical in-person presentation to our Membership, and the recording will be shared with our Members ahead of our endorsement recommendation and final vote. Stay tuned for more details on this later in the month.

Representatives of ballot measure positions will be interviewed during our regularly-scheduled July PAC Meeting on Tuesday, July 14th from 7-9pm, so please return your questionnaires prior to that date. Stay tuned for more details.

Your questionnaire responses and interview answers will weigh heavily in our overall endorsement process, so please take both seriously. Please contact us at pac@milklub.org to schedule an appointment once your questionnaire is completed.

Good Luck!

The Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club

1. Please include any and all contact information for your ballot measure position.

Campaign Name: San Franciscans for a Fair Recovery

Campaign email: rentreliefsf@gmail.com

Campaign Manager: Raya Steier 530-723-2426 sarkar.raya@gmail.com

Field and Communications Director: Patrick Cochran 610-246-2552
pcochran.media@gmail.com

Campaign Consultant: Jim Stearns jim@stearsconsulting.com

2. Briefly explain your position on this ballot initiative and why it should pass or fail this election cycle.

Our housing market is at risk due to COVID-19 and its economic fallout:

We cannot let history repeat itself. During the Great Recession of 2008, as real estate values declined, institutional real estate firms, ready with cash to spend, pounced on a prone market. As a result, San Francisco experienced an unprecedented consolidation of private real estate ownership. Forcing rent controlled tenants out of their homes allowed real estate companies to reset rents to market value, thereby extracting the profit margins needed to satisfy investors. Speculative real estate investors and corporate landlords have played an integral role in the displacement of black and brown families in San Francisco, completely transforming the profile of who calls this city their home.

In April 2020, Wall Street Journal reported that real estate investors are preparing for a “potential bonanza” in the aftermath of COVID-19.¹ A Bloomberg report found that private equity firms entered this year with \$1.5 trillion in unspent capital globally, making these institutions cash-ready to take on new properties, exponentially more so than they did in 2008.²

What the Fair Recovery Measure aims to do:

The Fair Recovery Measure is determined to avoid the devastating impacts of the current recession by doubling the transfer tax rate for real estate transactions, both residential and commercial, valued at \$10 million or more. For properties sold at more than \$10m but less than \$25m, the tax rate will increase from 2.75% to 5.5%. For properties sold at more than \$25m, the tax rate will increase from 3% to 6%.

The transfer tax increase seeks to address the harmful effects of real estate speculation and consolidation by incentivizing the transfer of property from private ownership to entities that do not have a profit imperative. It accomplishes this anti-speculative goal by waiving the transfer tax increase if a property owner sells the building to either the City and County of San Francisco, or to a qualified affordable housing non profit. We support this measure because it will tip the scales away from sales from one investment firm to another, whose business model is predicated on eviction and displacement, and instead incentivize sales for the purposes of creating affordable housing. For consummated high-value transactions in the private real estate

¹ Conrad Putzier, *Real-Estate Investors Eye Potential Bonanza in Distressed Sales*, The Wall Street Journal, April 7 2020. [Retrieved on 07/12/2020 from: [Real-Estate Investors Eye Potential Bonanza in Distressed Sales](#)]

² Melissa Karsh, *Private Equity Is Starting 2020 With More Cash Than Ever Before*, Bloomberg, Jan 1 2020. [Retrieved on 07/12/2020 from: [Private Equity Is Starting 2020 With More Cash Than Ever Before](#)]

market, The city will generate significantly a \$196 million per year according to the City Controller, an outcome we support.

What the Fair Recovery Measure will help fund:

The Fair Recovery Measure is accompanied by two ordinances that decide how the revenue from the tax increase will be spent to prevent housing injustice and provide stable short and long-term affordable housing for residents. Half of the revenue [50-75million] will go to a Rent Resolution and Relief Fund that will provide grants to landlords who voluntarily waive back rents for their tenants that were due during the COVID-19 crisis. Any funds not granted to landlords will be sent to existing back rent programs. The other half of the revenue [50-75million] will be used to finance the acquisition or creation of permanently affordable social housing. The money will go to land banking, community land trusts, limited equity coops, municipal housing, or other social housing efforts where the City maintains an interest in the property or land, or grants control to the residents, while providing affordable housing opportunities on site.

Why we support the Fair Recovery Measure:

We must pass the Fair Recovery Measure this election cycle to prevent big real estate companies from exacerbating the housing crisis in our city. We cannot let 2008 happen all over again. To stop mass evictions of rent controlled tenants, we support this measure's aim to incentivize the transfer of property from private to public hands. Working class San Franciscans are under pressure to pay their back-rent, and will be given relief through the Rent Resolution and Relief program, a decision we strongly support. The revenue generated from the measure will be used to create more affordable housing, a plan we support enthusiastically, just as corporate real estate firms prepare to take advantage of the current crisis.

San Franciscans voters have the power to stop this crisis from eviscerating our city. For this, voters must pass this measure to reign in real estate speculators and help provide permanent stable housing to residents in our city. We must energize voters to urgently pass this measure to stop the 2008 crisis from happening again, this time on an even larger scale. In the wake of protests for George Floyd, we must meet the moment and tackle racist housing policies that disproportionately affect black and brown families in our city.

3. What would be the fiscal impact of this ballot measure if it passes?

The measure will raise an estimated \$100-150 millions dollar per year by doubling the transfer tax on all properties sold over \$10 million. Sellers of properties worth over \$10 million will see the amount owed double from 2.75% to 5.5% while properties worth over \$25 million will see their rates go from 3% to 6%. All the money needed will come from these tax increases. Half of the revenue [\$50-75million] will go to fund the Rent Resolution and Relief Program and the other half [\$50-75million] will be used to acquire or create affordable housing units.

4. Who crafted this ballot measure, and how was it placed on the ballot?

The legislation was crafted in partnership with individuals of the San Francisco Anti-Displacement coalition including the SF Tenants Union, Housing Rights Committee, Chinatown Community Development Center, and the Council of Community Housing Organizations. The community wide effort to craft the transfer tax still continues with companion ordinances, the rent relief fund and social housing fund, which are going through the Board of Supervisors.

5. Who are your ballot measure position's principal consultants, and what are your main funding sources?

Jim Stearns is our political consultant and committee member. Maya Chupkov is our principal committee member. We are running a grassroots campaign, and in the process of finding our donors.

6. Who are some of your ballot measure position's individual and organizational supporters?

Supervisors Hilary Ronen, Shamann Walton, Aaron Peskin, Matt Haney and Gordon Mar have co-signed the ballot measure.

Organizations that have endorsed us include the Tenants Union, the Affordable Housing Alliance, Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, and the Coalition on Homelessness, National Union of Healthcare Workers [NUHW], BiSHOP and SOMA Community Action Network. We are in the process of getting many more endorsers.

7. Why do you believe the Harvey Milk LGBTQ Club should support your ballot measure's position?

For nearly 45 years, the Harvey Milk Club has always been at the forefront of fighting for progressive values in San Francisco. The battles you have won not only helped out the citizens of this great city but also provided an example to the rest of the country. Whether it was electing the first openly gay politician, increasing funding for AIDS treatment, opposing Prop 8, or protecting rent control, the Milk Club has been involved. As Harvey Milk himself was a strong proponent of a progressive anti-speculation tax³, we need your support to pass this measure in November, so that our city can continue to champion a cause Harvey cared deeply about.

We now need you more than ever as Covid-19 and the ensuing economic fallout has devastated this city. Thousands of people have lost their jobs and have no way to pay the rent. Private equity and rich investors are sitting on top of piles of money and are ready to swoop in and buy up distressed real estate, which will only further consolidation and lead to mass eviction. Our city has already gone through round after round of gentrification, and we can't afford any more. Working class LGBTQ populations, especially people of color, are some of the most vulnerable in the city and if we don't act now we will see many pushed out of their homes.

Our bill will prevent this process. The doubling of the transfer tax will disincentivize real estate speculation while raising money to help tenants pay back rent in addition to building more social housing. These are worthy progressive goals and we feel that they align with the values of the Harvey Milk Club.

So far, our measure has received overwhelming support. Six supervisors have already endorsed, along with numerous organizations. During public comment on July 9th we had 48 people call in support while not a single person voiced opposition. Despite this, we know that our coalition will not be complete until we get the support of this club. We will be facing some of the most powerful interest groups in the city and we know that we have the Harvey Milk Club in our corner in order to prevail.

³ Stefanie Doucette, *Happy birthday Harvey Milk! Here's what could have been*, The Bold Italic, May 22 2017. [Retrieved on 07/12/2020 from: [Happy Birthday, Harvey Milk! Here's What Could Have Been](#)]