

**Redistricting Commission  
Applicant Profile**

<b>Applicant #</b>	11395004463
<b>First Name</b>	Tejal
<b>Last Name</b>	Shah
<b>District</b>	District 7
<b>Time living in District</b>	Less than a year
<b>Time living in Oakland</b>	10 to 20 years
<b>Education</b>	Master's degree
<b>Income</b>	\$75,000 - \$124,999
<b>Voting history</b>	2018 & 2016 elections
<b>Gender</b>	Female
<b>Race/Ethncity</b>	Asian / Pacific Islander
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## Supplemental Questionnaire

Your response to each of the mandatory following questions is limited to no more than 500 words. Please type in the space provided for each question.

\*1. Why do you wish to serve on the Commission and why do you think the work of the Commission is important?

I have been an Oakland resident for more than 10 years, and through my work and involvement in the community, I have seen how district politics play out. Often, the people who are left behind during these struggles are the people who need the most support from their Oakland representatives. I want to be a part of the Redistricting Commission because I want to bring a lens of equity and fairness, where we are keeping in mind how imaginary boundaries and political infighting can have long-term impacts on Oakland's residents.

Setting fair district boundaries is important, as this leads to the fair allocation of resources and community supports. If everyone in Oakland had the same chance to succeed, we would be a brighter city.

\*2. Explain what it means to be impartial and describe your ability to exercise impartiality.

I think it is important to listen to all sides of an argument, gather all facts, and make decisions with the greater good in mind at all times. I grew up in the South, in a Republican state, and have spent most of my adult life in mostly Democratic communities. I have seen unfairness and lack of kindness on both sides, and feel the thing we as a society are lacking the most right now is the ability to have thoughtful discourse without harming each other. Our nation and our city does not need to be as divided as it is right now.

If I was part of the Redistricting Commission, it would be important to me not to let my own feelings or politics to get in the way of the facts, and to ensure that we create enough space and time for all sides of each decision to fully talk out their arguments before moving forward.

\*3. The Commissioners will need to work collaboratively in redrawing district boundaries. Provide an example from when you had to set aside your own self-interest to achieve a common goal.

As a member of the non-profit community, I often must set aside my self-interest to achieve a common goal with my colleagues and the communities we support. I run the social and financial services department at a local housing organization, and we pride ourselves in not letting our organizational needs and priorities come in the way of what our residents and clients want to accomplish. For example, I have provided training to individuals on how to advocate for policies that go against the policies supported by my organization. This is because, at the end of the day, it is important for individuals who live in a community to lead decision-making in their own lives. When people are empowered to take on leadership roles, they are less likely to be oppressed, and negative policies set by historically discriminatory practices can fall away.

\*4. All Commissioners must demonstrate an understanding of and appreciation for Oakland's diversity. Describe your knowledge of and appreciation for Oakland's people and places, and how this will enhance your work as a commissioner.

Oakland is my adopted home, and I love it. My father lived here when he first immigrated to the United States in the mid-1970s, and has stories to tell me about how he and his friends hung out at Eastmont Mall on the weekends, or used to drive down East 14<sup>th</sup> looking for their friends. I see how this city has changed over the decades because of policies that led to redlining, the construction of freeways splitting up communities, and now because of gentrification. Oakland is so diverse and has such a rich history, and I

am committed to preserve this, while breaking down the barriers that have been in place for so many residents over the years.

I believe my love for Oakland will enhance my role as a Commissioner because I will be thinking about Oakland first. It will help me stay grounded and be able to negotiate with others in a way that I hope will be fair and just.

\*5. Provide an example from when you faced a complex question or situation. What problem solving skills did you use to solve it?

I face complex situations every day. Currently, my team is working on how to adequately respond to the stressors faced by low-income communities brought on by the COVID-19 Shelter in Place Order. While everyone we talk to recognize the need to bring this virus under control, this is an easier task for those who have materials, resources, and access to support than for those that do not. As it is, residents of Oakland's flatlands live on average 15 years less than those who live in the Oakland hills. When faced with a real public health threat, my team is struggling to find ways to keep residents connected so that they are not on the losing end of this battle.

The way I have always been able to handle complex situations like this is by pulling people smarter than myself together and helping to negotiate solutions. I like having a diverse group of people around me who can help think of ways to tackle problems. And again, most importantly, the residents who are experiencing the most stress need to be the ones who are given the ability to lead us towards solutions.

\*6. Describe any professional, social, political, volunteer, community activities, and/or causes in which you have been involved or that you have financially supported. If you do not have any activities to report, type N/A in the space provided.

I have been involved in multiple activities since high school. These include:

- Participation in school volunteer programs
- Leading the South Asian American Council at University of Texas, Austin, as student group focused on providing community supports to low-income women
- Work at Apna Ghar, a domestic violence shelter and service provider in Chicago from 2001 – 2009
- Participating in Chicago's Low-Income Housing Trust Fund service committee from 2004 – 2009.
- Work at the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), a community development corporation in Oakland from 2010 – present.
  - o Through my work at EBALDC, I have sat on many committees, including the San Pablo Area Revitalization Collaborative, and the Healthy Havenscourt Collaborative.
  - o I started EBALDC's Resident Leadership Council, which is a group of residents from various affordable housing properties that come together to enact community change.

**Additional Information (Optional)**

If there is any additional information that was not asked in the Supplemental Questionnaire that you believe would help the Screening Panel in making their nominations, you may enter that information here. Your response here is optional.

Nothing further.

\*I understand that if selected as a Commissioner, I shall be ineligible, for a period of 10 years beginning from the date of appointment, to hold elective public office for the City of Oakland. Additionally, I shall be ineligible, for a period of four years beginning from the date of appointment, to hold appointive public office for the City of Oakland or Oakland Unified School Board, to serve as paid staff for or as a paid consultant to Oakland City Council, or any member of the City Council or Oakland School Board, to receive a non-competitively bid contract with the City of Oakland, or to register as a lobbyist. This four-year ban on having a paid consultancy or entering noncompetitively bid contracts applies to myself individually and all entities for which I am a controlling person. Please enter your initials below to confirm your understanding of these statements.

Initials:	TS
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\*I affirm, by entering my name in the space provided, that the statements contained in this application are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Name:	Tejal J. Shah
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