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San Bernardino's 7th Ward Forum

Tackled Affordable Housing and

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2 min read

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(Left to right) Treasure Ortiz, James Penman, Damon Alexander, and Vanessa Perez at the forum on February 8th, 2024 at Ecclesia Christian Fellowship.

By Nathanael Hernandez, IECN/SBVC Film Student Intern

Ánimo.

Eso es lo que necesito para
enfrentar el Alzheimer.

No es fácil aceptar que los problemas de memoria puedan ser un signo de la enfermedad de Alzheimer y no solo una parte normal del envejecimiento.

Pero puedo reducir mi riesgo, controlando mi presión arterial y mi diabetes tipo 2.

Porque yo tengo la valentía para **enfrentar el Alzheimer.**

A black and white portrait of an elderly woman with short dark hair, wearing a patterned top and a necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

Obtén más información en [EnfrentaALZ.com](https://www.takeonalz.com/es/)

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The race for the San Bernardino City Council's 7th Ward seat heated up as candidates Treasure Ortiz, James Penman, and incumbent Damon Alexander shared their visions for the city at a forum on Thursday, Feb. 8. The event, organized by The People's Forum and live-streamed by [KVCR Public Media](https://www.kvcr.org/) (<https://www.kvcr.org/>), allowed each candidate two minutes to address critical issues facing the city, such as affordable housing and quality of life improvements.

Moderator Vanessa Perez, Executive Director of the Time for Change Foundation, kicked off the forum by asking the candidates about their motivations for running for City Council. Alexander introduced himself as the elected American Legion District Commander, responsible for "10,000 veterans and their families." Penman, a former city attorney, cited a lack of respect and opposition in the current City Council as his reasons for running, emphasizing that "this must change." Ortiz, focusing on community needs, expressed her desire to improve public safety, street conditions, and build a better future for San Bernardino residents.

The candidates were then asked about their plans to ensure affordable housing in light of record-high home prices. Ortiz proposed financial education and rent control reform to address the issue of "slumlords" who raise prices without maintaining properties. Penman highlighted his experience in dealing with rent control through code enforcement, mentioning his efforts to close over 500 gang and drug houses and relocate affected residents with a \$250,000 council fund. Alexander emphasized his current actions, such as implementing code enforcement and requiring landlords to undergo an 8-hour course to protect renters from exploitation.

On the topic of improving working conditions and quality of life, Penman advocated for attracting the right businesses to the city that offer livable wages, not just minimum wage. Alexander spoke about his efforts to support small businesses during COVID-19, including providing \$2.5 million in ARPA money for grants and opening an entrepreneur center to educate business owners. Ortiz emphasized the importance of utilizing existing resources and encouraged a self-reliant approach to success.

The forum also addressed the city's infrastructure challenges, particularly the issue of potholes and road resurfacing. Ortiz suggested focusing on preserving salvageable streets and allocating funds specifically for paving, stating that she has a plan and knows how to execute it. Penman argued for a complete



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achievements, positive school climate, and
efforts in closing the achievement gap.

With a 99-point increase in English Language

rebuild of the streets, while Alexander pointed to the city's current street payment plan and the effectiveness of "Hot-Patching" for repairs.

As the forum concluded, the candidates presented diverse approaches to addressing San Bernardino's challenges. With the election approaching on March 5th, voters will have to decide which candidate's vision aligns best with their hopes for the city's future.

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