

1. Affordable Housing: Estimates show nearly half of all D.C. renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent. What resources will you implement to create more affordable housing options in the District?

I believe housing is a human right. However, we cannot guarantee access to housing that does not exist. As a Councilmember, I will increase the supply of housing by making it easier and faster to build in DC, especially subsidized affordable housing. I will support the Housing Production Omnibus Act, to preserve the ability of the DC's main affordable housing production tool — the Housing Production Trust Fund — to actually fund the construction of urgently needed affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing for residents who previously experienced homelessness. I have built my entire campaign around housing, deliberately appointing a housing policy expert as my campaign chairman to ensure that housing affordability permeates everything we do and advocate for.

However, we need to go further by identifying new funding streams to support affordability programs, such as by expanding DC's efforts to create publicly financed mixed-income housing (also known as social housing). I have appointed housing policy advisors to my campaign who are intimately familiar with models such as Montgomery County's, so that we can learn how to adapt them to DC. I am a strong proponent of funding purchases under the District Opportunity to Purchase Act (DOPA), which is already on the books, and could allow DC to quickly enter the social-housing game. I am also an advocate for properly implementing key elements from the Homeward DC 2.0 plan; while those provisions were promising, there has been a lack of efficient and proper implementation. As a Councilmember, I will champion strengthening DC's investment in non-congregate shelter and permanent supportive housing.

2. Safe Housing: What policies will you advocate for to provide safe housing to people across D.C., including those living in poor rental conditions?

I will prioritize effective oversight of the Department of Buildings (DOB) as a Councilmember to ensure that residents have safe housing. In fact, I have already done this as an ANC Commissioner. A structural collapse at a construction site occurred in my commission area one year ago, which resulted in the death of a worker. My commission has worked consistently all year to accompany the investigations by the DOB and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). We invited representatives of DOB to multiple meetings to discuss their preliminary findings, their published after-action report, and the ongoing policy changes resulting from the accident. Our oversight has resulted in substantive changes inside DOB and has raised the incident to the attention of the Council. My team and I are intent on honoring the memory of the victim, Edgar, and his family by seeking justice as well as reforms that will prevent similar tragedies in the future. This is not a typical activity for an ANC, but I have encouraged and coordinated this important undertaking because we did not have faith that

DOB's internal process would yield sufficient accountability. This is the tenacity I will bring to the Council and its all-important oversight functions.

As a Councilmember, I will use oversight to push for better enforcement of housing standards and work with the Office of the Attorney General to identify and prosecute bad landlords. I also support the Strengthening Tenant Receivership and Oversight for Neighborhood Growth (STRONG) Homes Amendment Act, a proposed bill that would empower the Attorney General to more quickly hold negligent landlords accountable.

As a Councilmember, I will ensure that the DOB focuses on comprehensive building-wide inspections that document major health and housing code violations and ADA noncompliance in properties with negligent landlords. I will ask for consistent and sufficient financial resources for pair-testing, which enables fair-housing organizations to investigate and document fair-housing violations, including housing discrimination based on the sources of income and other protected factors, such as race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. I will also ask that fair-housing organizations investigate whether existing tenants with vouchers are treated differently or experience discrimination, such as being placed in unsafe housing units, due to the fact that they use vouchers to partially cover their rents.

3. Shelter Capacity: D.C.'s low-barrier shelters are often at high capacity. Do you think there are enough shelter beds and locations in your ward, including spaces for women, men, youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals? If not, what new facilities (low-barrier, non-congregate, etc.) would you advocate for?

There is an unmet need for facilities in Ward 1 and the District. Overall, I support expanding DC's capacity to provide low-barrier, emergency shelter for unhoused people, while also focusing on longer-term solutions that provide access to housing and support services with dignity and care. This includes non-congregate shelter and permanent supportive housing solutions.

The Terrell facility in my own ANC Single -Member District 1B09 is an example of a property that provides transitional housing with wraparound services, delivered in a dignified new building that is embedded in a neighborhood without stigmatizing signage. The facility offers both family-sized units as short-term housing for families and one-bedroom units for individuals in need of permanent supportive housing. Of course, that is not to say that the Terrell operates perfectly; I have worked with its management to address complaints about inadequate HVAC, for example, which left families spending all day outside during the summer to avoid suffocating heat indoors.

As a Councilmember, I will champion expanding DC's support for such developments, including those that provide transitional housing and permanent supportive housing options for individuals and families, as well as scale up my ability to offer constituent services to residents experiencing homelessness as well as oversight to ensure that residents are able to move through the lifecycle of services/Continuum of Care and "graduate" to stable situations (with special emphasis on systemic challenges in the crucial "lease-up" phase).

Ward 1 needs low-barrier shelter sites that are tailored for women experiencing homelessness, such as St. Josephine Bakhita in Ward 4 and Pat Handy in Ward 2. I support creating a new facility with support services in Ward 1 to support women experiencing homelessness.

Additionally, Ward 1 has Alston's Place, a facility dedicated to LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability. I support replicating this successful model for a larger impact, which is also found in other wards, such as the Covenant House and Sasha Bruce House facilities. This is specifically important for LGBTQ+ youth who are more likely to experience homelessness in DC.

4. Encampment Closures: D.C. officials recently said the city "shouldn't have encampments" and has been closing encampments regularly for the last several years. What is your stance on the city's encampment engagement policy, and should the city be closing more or fewer encampments? What resources should people be offered during encampment closures?

First, let me be clear that criminalization and the thoughtless clearing of encampments, such as we have seen in the past few years, are not the path to addressing homelessness in DC; they only serve to disrupt service delivery, stigmatize residents facing homelessness (who often lose their belongings during clearings), and pointlessly chase them from one jurisdiction to another.

On the Council, I will require that the DC Department of Human Services provide the Council with real-time data on outreach efforts and housing solutions offered to individuals preceding any encampment closures. Any efforts to close encampments should be data-driven and linked to the availability of guaranteed housing placement, rather than relying on access to services with no guaranteed housing access. I would only accept closures of encampments that are preceded by voluntary long-term intensive outreach to build trust between people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and outreach workers that leads to matching each person to a non-congregate shelter program or permanent supportive housing.

5. Vouchers: This year, the mayor's budget proposal does not include any new housing vouchers for people experiencing homelessness. How would you advocate to respond to homelessness given the city's limited resources?

My core philosophy when it comes to politics is simple: budgets should not be balanced on the backs of the most vulnerable community members. On the Council, my priorities in budgeting will be to avoid short-term savings that entail long-term costs, and to not break promises, especially promises to support our neighbors experiencing homelessness. As an alternative, I would like to grow our tax base and ensure that tax burdens are borne equitably. I support Councilmember Parker's proposal to create a tiered surcharge on realized capital gains, to increase taxes on realized capital gains primarily on the top 1 percent of DC taxpayers. This proposal would help fund essential programs like vouchers for unhoused people.

6. Stakeholder Input: How have you involved people with lived experience of homelessness in your policy-making, and how will you in the future?

In my role as a Commissioner, I have worked with unhoused individuals staying in or near my district, both along 14th Street and in Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park. I have seen first-hand the challenges in navigating the wide array of stakeholders (and multiple simultaneous case managers!) that enter into the picture. Bureaucratic complexity is itself a burden that we impose upon those with the least legal/administrative capacity and fewest resources. I am eager to deliver effective systems that match unhoused DC residents with low-barrier transitional housing to rapidly rehouse individuals and families experiencing homelessness and provide them with medical and financial support to ensure their success and keep them stably housed.