

**Ward 1 Candidates Forum:  
Discussion of the Comprehensive Plan on Development, Housing, and Land Use in DC**

**Candidate Questionnaire**

**Instructions:** Please complete this questionnaire and return to Justin Godard ([godardjm1@gmail.com](mailto:godardjm1@gmail.com)) by Friday, March 23, 2018.

**Name:**

*1) In your view, should our housing policies reflect the belief that safe, affordable housing and safe, clean shelter is a right?*

Yes, I do, and I'm proud to live in a place that has a right to shelter. As chair of the Committee on Human Services, preventing homelessness and strengthening the District's homelessness emergency services are a major focus of my work. Working with a coalition of providers and residents, I recently reformed the decade-old Homeless Services Act to preserve the District's right to shelter while ultimately strengthening our emergency homeless services. The reforms will allow us to move more families into housing and out of shelter. I also worked to address housing insecurity for the thousands of families impacted across the District.

*If so, do you think those needs are best met through public housing options and/or a private market with more government controls, or do you think it is best met through a private real estate market with fewer government regulations?*

This is a yes, and situation. We need to be building affordable housing for our most vulnerable residents while also allowing the market to produce units for those who can afford to pay market rate. When we are smart, we leverage private investment to help pay for the cost of subsidized units. I've had success with leveraging private dollars in Ward 1. A Howard University redevelopment project with a Community Benefits Agreement included renovation dollars for common spaces in Garfield Terrace and LeDroit Apartments. At Park Morton, we have a full public-private partnership as part of New Communities for 1-to-1 replacement of existing units that will also add hundreds more units across two public sites, the old Bruce Monroe School site and the current Park Morton site. The breakdown of units in this project is one third replacement units (30% AMI and below), one third workforce units (50% AMI) and one third market rate units, which subsidize some of the operating costs of the lower income units, along with project-based vouchers and tax credits. Public housing isn't the only form of affordable housing. In Ward 1 we have buildings that are subsidized and managed by private entities, and we also have affordable ownership opportunities.

*What policies will you pursue that reflect your beliefs while meeting the needs of the extremely low income, moderate income, and families regardless of their race, immigration and/or language spoken?*

Right now in the District of Columbia, there is a deep disparity among different racial and ethnic groups. The average income of a white family is \$80,000, the average income of an Hispanic family is \$50,000 and the average income of an African American family is \$30,000. Historic discrimination has created this situation, such as redlining that prevented African Americans

from purchasing homes and building equity and generational wealth. In the case of Hispanic families, discrimination based on language barriers and actual language access issues have contributed to income disparities, but they have fared better than African Americans perhaps because of a strong support system of community-based organizations that welcome immigrants, and the benefits conveyed to those with lighter skin tones.

The cost of living in a city as prosperous as DC is only going to go up. While we are doing the work of better preparing our workforce for careers we need to continue doing all we can to offset the cost of housing. I've worked to preserve and produce more than 500 units of affordable housing in Ward 1 (at 30%, 50% and 80% AMI, but with a strong focus at 50% and below which is less than \$55,000/year for a family of four) since I took office three years ago. Preservation is key here, because we cannot build fast enough for the need. The other major investment we've made, that I've supported, is our Local Rent Supplement Program, which gives residents rent vouchers to subsidize existing housing such that they are only paying one third of their income in rent. If we go back to my original point about income disparities in the District, we can see that the different racial and ethnic groups break out somewhat neatly in 30% of AMI for African Americans, 50% of AMI for Hispanics and 80% of AMI for Whites. To rectify the racial inequities we need to be sure to focus our efforts in the 50% AMI and below categories, and I have been exploring how we can do deeper investments in 30% AMI (\$33,000/year for a family of four) by creating incentives such as bonus density for those who build a certain number of units at this price point.

*2) Do you believe the city's recent economic development strategies affected inequality and homelessness? And in what ways? What new economic development policies, if any, would you pursue to meet the needs of all residents making \$30,000 or less?*

Yes. Growth and development, if not done thoughtfully, can lead to displacement. Recently the DC Council began a series of Race Equity trainings. We are learning more about how to draft legislation and implement policies that take race into account. See discussion above about income disparities. See my response to question 1 about public housing, which is for people making \$30,000 or less.

Housing First has been the homelessness policy in the District for several years now, with the belief that helping families find stability in their own home will allow us to better serve their underlying needs, whether they be job readiness, mental health or family conflict. In FY2018 I moved nearly \$8 million into housing programs – hundreds of units of Permanent Supportive Housing and Targeted Affordable Housing. I also invested in our Homelessness Prevention Program, which partners families at risk with local organizations like Community of Hope, and helps them stabilize before they become homeless. I also funded the newly launched plan to end youth homelessness, Solid Foundations, in the FY2018 budget. Breaking the cycle of homelessness early can help prevent chronic homelessness.

*3) In your view, has the city's focus on creating more market rate housing supply fueled or reduced displacement pressure on lower income people and affordable housing stock?*

See above. Because traditional supply/demand rules don't always play out like in the housing market, we need to keep neighborhood effects in mind if we want to make housing truly affordable without pushing people out.

*Are the policies in the comprehensive plan that aim to reduce displacement pressure and preserve black and/or immigrant neighborhoods from gentrification sufficient to that task, or would you take additional steps to achieve these goals?*

We need to continue to do more to reduce displacement, but that goes beyond housing and the comprehensive plan. One of the most pressing issues we have right now in the District is a mismatch between our workforce and the jobs that are being created. There are good jobs with real career paths available, but our residents are not being prepared for them. I've championed clean teams, economic development projects with local hiring requirements, and am leading a working group to determine methods of recruiting and retaining home care workers.

Based on what I have learned through our race equity workshops, I am looking to create my own Ward 1 Race Equity Leadership Council to help me review projects and proposals through a lens of race equity and to pro-actively pursue policies that address race equity throughout the community. For example, how will the Park Morton redevelopment project change the Georgia Avenue corridor, and how can we prevent displacement of longtime residents and businesses? I'll be looking at the model used for the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park to address these questions in Ward 1.

*4) In your role as councilmember, how would you use the comprehensive plan to make sure that DC is protecting its infrastructure and the environment as new development occurs?*

Despite being a high-density city, the District has an incredible wealth of open space and natural resources. In fact, [we have the most park land per area or per resident than any other city](#) -- more than double the national average. This space is a large reason why the District is such an attractive and livable city. However, a large majority of our park space is under the control of the National Park Service rather than the District -- an unfortunate consequence of our sometimes tenuous relationship with the federal government. That means that a lot of our parks are governed by the same ethos that govern massive national parks like Yellowstone, rather than meeting the needs of an urban community. Spaces like Franklin Square or even the hundreds of small triangle parks are perfect examples of this missed opportunity.

Open space and development are often seen as mutually exclusive, but there are ways for them to interact in a virtuous cycle. More people living near a park makes the park more lively and welcoming, which then makes a place more attractive to live.

There are some parts of the city -- like Ward 1, which I represent -- that don't have adequate public space. It's important to use policies like the Comprehensive Plan to make sure we're balancing our growth and using that momentum and investment to create public spaces that interact well with their environment and have effective programming for people of all walks of life. This is especially important to keep in mind when public land is being used. The privatization of public space is a concerning development in cities across the country, and DC is no exception.