

**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) 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? 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?

On May 6, 2017, I remember the tears that formed in my eyes as I read the Washington Post article titled [The D.C. Housing Department forfeited millions as families waited for help](#). My heart was broken to hear that the rapidly rising population of homeless people in the District of Columbia are not only being left out in the cold, but that the very dollars that could and should be used to provide housing them were being sent back to the federal government because our city lacks the oversight and accountability required to make sure that we are doing everything that we possibly can to protect the most vulnerable amongst us. Access to quality affordable housing and safe, clean shelter is a fundamental tenet of our democracy and a hallmark of DC's values, as a progressive and Human Rights City, we have this responsibility to our residents. Every DC resident should have public housing options, therefore the local government must do more to fill in the gap.

Despite the prosperity the District has experienced over the past decade, so many families have been priced out of our Nation's Capital. Over the next 20-years some reports, indicate an influx of over 700,000 new residents. Local officials must make every effort to ensure this new group of District residents can have affordable housing options. Currently, the government spends less than 3% of its budget on affordable housing. With the average home price rising to over \$500K and in Ward 1 alone the average home selling for more than \$600K, incomes are not rising at the same rate as housing / rent prices. There is no single magic wand answer for this question. A combination of public housing and private housing with government controls will appropriately address the problem, including increasing money allocated for the Housing Production Trust Fund, protecting the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, developing more co-ops, and creative exploration of community land trust models.

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?

I would expand the scope and budget allocation of the DC Housing Production Trust fund to ensure the safety and housing of our most vulnerable families and residents. With so many families experiencing chronic homelessness, and the more than 30,000 families that are experiencing poverty in the Nation's Capital. I would also implement a review board within the

DHCD, too often Affordable Housing Developers experience significant bureaucracy and red tape creating significant hurdles in their access to financing, bonds to secure invested dollars, and several other hurdles. These challenges make Affordable Housing Development unnecessarily inaccessible and belabor the Affordable Housing Crisis.

As councilmember, I will advocate for more tax incentives and structure programs for homes that are going on the market to easily be converted into affordable units, and to entice the development community to prioritize affordable housing. We are not having genuine dialogue around the issue of affordable housing if we do not regard the most vulnerable populations in need of affordable housing. This includes our economically and culturally diverse members of our community, but also our seniors, who we can immediately support through capping property tax increases on those of our residents who have been here the longest. We also need to work to introduce and pass legislation that institutes rent control on units the city helps developers subsidize. While we may be able to get individuals and families in homes in the short term we must be thinking long term sustainability of housing so future market booms do not push people out.

According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, between 2002 to 2013 the District lost about 50 percent of its units that were renting for under \$800 a month¹. With only menial replacement of the available affordable housing stock, as Councilmember it would be my responsibility to explore and implement programs such as DOPA which would enable the city to purchase apartment buildings from developers to be used as affordable housing.

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?

Our city is at an inflection point. The pace of development is leaving behind so many of our most vulnerable residents and middle-class families behind. We need to do a better job of incentivizing developers and businesses to invest in the local economy, by hiring local residents especially as they are required to do so by DC's First Source Laws.

All too often, the deal that developers receive is one that our most vulnerable residents would never receive. From tax-breaks to specialized zoning and bonding structures. We must examine every tool at our disposal to better encourage and reward developers who are creating development that is accessible and accessible to the wide spectrum of residents that make up the fabric of the District of Columbia. The economic development strategies that we have been seeing have removed many low income and public housing units and replaced them with market rate units. At one time, market rate was \$4-500, and salaries matched the cost of rent in most areas of the District, however, as rents have risen, salaries disproportionately have not. I would prioritize tax incentives for Developers who want to build 100% affordable housing at 0%-30% of the AMI, and put a stop order on projects that aren't hiring DC residents. I would also work to

¹ [Washington City Paper: D.C. Finally Rolls Out Rules for an Almost Decade-Old Affordable Housing Law](#)

ensure that the legal targets the city has committed to through the HPTF are met, which according to the latest audit were not met², and there is minimal accountability for developers.

I would better incentivize companies that are interested in doing work in DC to not just move vulnerable residents to temporary shelters and housing but to equip them with the skills necessary to join the workforce and earn a living wage.

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? 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?

The rules of supply and demand clearly indicate that by removing affordable units whose price points are accessible for residents whose income is 20-30% of the AMI, and replacing them with market rate units, displacement is expedited. The process of displacement is only expedited when we bring establishments that only expedite the process of displacement such as Whole Foods. The Comprehensive Plan is already too broad in its demand for affordable housing. There is no language specifying the definition of affordable housing, nor any metrics to measure the availability of affordable housing. I would push for language that more clearly qualifies the demand for affordable housing in the short and long term, especially prioritizing its availability for DC residents and employees.

Creating more market rate housing by default prices out so many working class families. Through the changes to the TOPA law, we continue to see the rights of tenants and working renters eroded. We need a healthy mix of affordable and market rate housing. Often times, we see that the number of affordable units is insignificant in proportion to the market rate units that are developed.

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?

To echo the sentiments of Councilmember Robert White;

“Our city needs a stronger guiding tool for development and growth,” council member Robert C. White Jr. (D-At Large) said at the hearing. “We need to explicitly recognize that the future of our city is being driven right now by displacement of our longest-term residents.”

First, the Comprehensive Plan would first be amended to specifying the amount of Affordable units required in order to meet the demand of DC's rapidly increasing population. Secondly, I would introduce legislation requiring the council to update the comprehensive plan to meet the demands of the shifting conditions of the housing market.

²[City Paper Article: Auditor Publishes Damning Report Alleging Chronic Mismanagement of D.C.'s \\$1 Billion Affordable Housing Fund](#)

