

# Muriel Bowser

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## Q1

### CANDIDATE INFORMATION

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## Q2

**Yes**

The “36Kx2025” target—the Bowser administration’s goal to add 36,000 new units of housing in the District by 2025—was announced in 2019 and will, presumably, be completed in just a few years. Do you commit to another housing-production goal for 2030?

## Q3

If so, how many additional units of housing do you think should be built in the District by 2030?

While we projected in 2019 that we would likely need another 24,000 housing units by 2030, with 8,000 of them affordable by 2030, a lot has changed since 2020. Between the effects of COVID-19, the trend of working from home, and the challenges around Census 2020 data, we will need to monitor the data closely to create goals and policies that align with the ultimate outcome that we all seek: a housing market with homes across the District that are affordable for families across the income spectrum. I have committed more than any other elected official in the District’s history and in the region to funding and creating affordable housing and will devote the necessary resources to continue to do so beyond 2025.

**Q4**

Where in the District do you think new housing should be built? If you do not think new housing should be built in the District, please write, "I do not think new housing should be built in the District."

When I first ran to be your Mayor, I promised to invest more in affordable housing than any mayor before and that's just what we've done. I recognized that while we needed more affordable housing in every neighborhood, not all neighborhoods were creating opportunities for low-income families to live. So I set housing goals by neighborhood, which included creating nearly 2,000 affordable homes in neighborhoods west of Rock Creek Park. This made us the first jurisdiction to set this type of neighborhood-level goal. I followed up by making changes to our future land use to allow more housing along Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues. We created a new tax abatement focused on high-cost areas as well as a "Cash 2 Covenant" program, which can help broaden the geographic reach of affordable housing. Finally, we are working with our faith-based institutions, which own about 1,450 vacant parcels of land in D.C., which if used strategically could produce upward of 6,000 new homes. There's more to do and my commitment is to continue to push so all families can afford to live and thrive in the most dynamic city in the country.

**Q5**

Please rank the following policies to increase housing production in the order that you would request your administration to pursue them, if elected. If you would not request your staff pursue a policy, please select N/A. (This list is purposefully not inclusive of affordability and stabilization policies, which are addressed in subsequent questions.)

Legalizing two-unit buildings District-wide	<b>N/</b>
Legalizing four-unit buildings District-wide	<b>A</b>
Subsidizing individual homeowners to construct ADUs	<b>N/</b>
Increasing the percentage of affordable housing required in public-land dispositions	<b>A 2</b>
Incentivizing the conversion of office buildings to residential properties	<b>A</b>
Eliminating the Height Act	<b>N/</b>
Eliminating parking requirements in new construction	<b>A 5</b>
Amending the building code to reduce construction costs	<b>4</b>
Legalizing and incentivizing housing above public facilities, such as libraries, rec centers, and fire stations	<b>1</b>

**Q6**

Given the likely marginal effects of converting office buildings to residential on increasing the District’s housing supply (page 3, #1), and given the fact that paying building owners to place affordability covenants on their properties is a preservation, not production, policy, how will you address the District’s housing shortage at a scale that will meet the need of its residents at all income levels?

When I first ran to be your Mayor, I promised to invest more in affordable housing than any mayor before and that’s just what we’ve done. I have worked to ensure we produce both more housing and more affordable housing. We set a historic goal of creating 36,000 new units including 12,000 units of affordable housing and we’ve made historic investments in housing, including a \$500 million investment announced this year, for a 7-year total of \$1B. As a result of this commitment and others, we’ve had more housing growth than any other state. I recognize that we need to reduce structural barriers to housing production to create housing and affordable housing so we updated the Comprehensive Plan to allow for 15% more housing, including along corridors like New York Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue. Given the effects of COVID-19 on downtown, there may be an opportunity to create housing at a greater scale than that referenced report contemplated. This could be a win-win-win; creating more housing, facilitating more vibrant mixed-use, centrally-located neighborhoods, and reducing the impact – especially on tax revenues - of decreased office demand. There’s more to do and my commitment is to continue to push so all families a pathway to the middle class.

**Q7**

I consider affordable housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

**Means-tested or income-restricted,  
Costing no more than 30 percent of one’s household income**

**Q8**

I consider market-rate housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

**Not means-tested or income-restricted,  
Unsubsidized,  
Not rent-controlled**

**Q9**

How many units of housing do you think should be built in the District by 2030 for households making between:

0-30 percent MFI (\$0- \$27,100 per year for a household of one)?

**For question 9, please refer to my administration’s plans to produce 36,000 units of housing by 2025 here and here.**

**Q10**

In response to criticisms that it has failed to meet its targets for building extremely low-income housing (units restricted to residents earning 30 percent AMI or below), the Department of Housing and Community Development has stated, on page 23 of this report, that it cannot do so without coordination and support from other agencies, such as the D.C. Housing Finance Agency and the Department of Human Services. What is the best path forward to ensure extremely low-income housing is reliably produced?

My administration has worked assiduously to improve the way we fund affordable housing developments across our city, making the process more efficient while better targeting resources to our most vulnerable residents. In fact, over the past six years, the District has invested more funds into affordable housing, per capita, than any other city in the country and has seen the results. This strategy has produced, preserved, and initiated the creation of tens of thousands of units of affordable housing. I am extremely proud of these achievements and especially proud that the overwhelming majority of HPTF dollars have gone to serve very low-income families at or below 50% of the Median Family Income ("MFI"). Median Family Income is also sometimes referred to as Area Median Income. In fact, since the 2015 Consolidated Request for Proposals new construction projects financed by HPTF have only financed units at or below this very low-income band. By targeting our resources to the lower income bands, we have not only been able to surpass statutory requirements for very low-income households, but provide thousands of safe, clean affordable housing units for those households across our city. However, we know we need to do more to coordinate HPTF investment at extremely low-income levels, i.e., 30% MFI, with the necessary operating subsidy to produce units. One such supportive program that is critical to the success of HPTF in reaching the lowest income residents is the Local Rent Support Program, known as LSRP. To advance the necessary coordination among programs, Local Rent Supplement Program Enhancement will allow DHCD, for the first time, to coordinate operating resources to achieve the lowest income statutory goals. DHCD will also make the production of affordable housing units serving extremely low-income households a priority project evaluation criteria in the Qualified Allocation Plan and subsequent Consolidated RFP. It has been an incremental process over the years to target the 50% MFI and below bucket and we are now at the next stage where the city, and DHCD, can align our resources to better target the 30% MFI and below bucket for the first time.

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**Q11**

How will your administration ensure that the District produces housing for residents who make between 50 percent AMI (\$45,150 for a household of one) and 80 percent AMI (\$72,250 for a household of one)?

The Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) is the major tool used to produce and preserve affordable housing in the District of Columbia. It is a special revenue fund administered by DHCD's Development and Finance Division (DFD) that provides gap financing for projects affordable to low and moderate income households. The HPTF was created by the Housing Production Trust Fund Act of 1988, which requires that each fiscal year:

- At least 50 percent of HPTF spending serves households with incomes below 30 percent of the area median income (AMI).
- At least another 40 percent of expenditures serve households with incomes between 30 percent and 50 percent AMI.
- The balance of funds can serve households with incomes up to 80 percent AMI.

As stated elsewhere in this questionnaire, my administration has invested more than \$1B into the HPTF since 2015. Going forward, we will invest even more, including for income bands above 50% AMI, a critical segment of the population that can be overlooked in the provision of affordable housing.

**Q12**

How will your administration ensure the District produces housing for residents who make between 80 percent AMI (\$72,250 for a household of one) and 120 percent AMI (\$108,350)?

One way is by providing home purchase assistance. The Home Purchase Assistance program provides interest-free loans and closing cost assistance to qualified applicants to purchase single family houses, condominiums, or cooperative units in the District. We also offer the Employer Assisted Housing Program, which offers a deferred, 0% interest loan and a matching funds grant for down payment and closing costs for DC government employees to purchase their first single family home, condominium, or cooperative unit in the District.

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**Q13**

While the District has a robust Housing Production Trust Fund, it is not infinite, and land costs in the District impact the number of affordable units that can be constructed, as well as the percentage of MFI to which they are subsidized. The below scenarios are not inclusive of all options that will ever be on the table. They are, however, representative of the tradeoffs inherent in balancing funding for and the location of publicly subsidized affordable housing, which is often cross-subsidized with market-rate housing. Please choose the scenario you would prefer, and explain why you prefer that scenario.

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**One 25-unit project each in both Bellevue and Forest Hills, for residents making between 80 (\$72,250) and 120 percent (\$108,350) MFI**

**Q14**

I prefer this scenario because:

This form requires that one of the above answers is selected. However, please disregard as my answer is that the only scenario provided above that I won't support is the first one, which would result in no affordable housing in Forest Hills. My philosophy is to use more than the HPTF to produce and preserve affordable housing everywhere in the District. I believe our greatest strength is our diversity and the best way to leverage that diversity is to welcome residents of all incomes to live comfortably in all neighborhoods across the city. With regard to affordable housing, that means, for instance, more workforce housing in places like Bellevue and more deeply affordable housing in places like Forest Hills.

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**Q15**

The Office of Planning's Housing Framework for Equity and Growth, released in October 2019, sets targets for the production of affordable housing per planning area "to achieve an equitable distribution of no less than 15 percent affordable housing in each planning area by 2050." Progress on those targets since January 2019 is illustrated in the above chart, from the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. What will you do to ensure that every planning area meets its stated target by 2050?

My administration created the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth and I stand by it. We are making significant progress on our goal to create 36,000 housing units by 2025, 12,000 of them affordable. However, we know that those units must be distributed more equitably. That is why DC is the first jurisdiction to create housing goals by neighborhood. We've made significant progress but we need to do more, particularly in areas west of Rock Creek Park. There, historical discriminatory land use, zoning and financing practices have impacted housing opportunities and caused the displacement of Black residents in particular. So, we are intentionally focusing there through the HPTF, Inclusionary Zoning and our latest update to the Comprehensive Plan to allow for more housing construction along major corridors west of Rock Creek Park. As shared above, we also created a new tax abatement, a "Cash 2 Covenant" program, and are working with our faith-based institutions, which own about 1,450 vacant parcels of land in D.C., which if used strategically could produce upward of 6,000 new homes.

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**Q16**

Given widespread support for limited-equity co-ops and community land trusts, what will you do to encourage their proliferation?

My administration has made it clear that we are in the business of financing and subsidizing the creation and preservation of affordable housing, including limited equity co-ops. Limited-equity cooperatives are a key part of the affordable housing landscape in the District of Columbia. We recently financed the preservation of 30 units of limited equity housing in Ward 4. We have included limited equity co-ops in our economic strategy and have produced a report of recommendations about how to advance LECs.

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**Q17**

The District Opportunity to Purchase Act "gives the mayor the authority to purchase certain apartment buildings in order to maintain existing rental affordable units for tenants and increase the total number of affordable rental units within the District." DOPA is primarily used as a preservation tool: If tenants do not exercise their TOPA rights, the District can make an offer on a building, as long as it "consists of five or more rental units and 25 percent or more of those units are 'affordable' at 50 percent of the median family income." What would you change about this, if anything?

DOPA is a crucial affordable housing preservation tool, but without regulations to make it enforceable, the law had no teeth. My administration was the first to recognize the potential of DOPA and we were the first to approve regulations to implement it. We will finally be able to use DOPA to preserve more affordable housing units for Washingtonians and will be aggressively identifying properties beginning in the new year. DOPA is now a real tool in our toolbox of innovative affordable housing strategies.

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**Q18**

Describe your views of the District's inclusionary zoning policy. What do you think it should be achieving? What is it currently failing to do? What, if anything, you think should be changed about it?

Inclusionary Zoning is a critical housing production tool in the District. Because it requires larger projects that can receive additional density in order to fund the affordable units, it will be smaller in scale and higher in MFI targeting than other tools like HPTF, but it has been critical for creating units across the District and in high-cost areas and buildings. Because it works without direct subsidy, it may appear to be a magic policy but in reality, I recognize that it must be carefully calibrated so as not to snuff out overall housing production, thereby causing more pressure on housing and reducing revenues. Which is why we created the IZ+ tool to ensure the additional density allowed under the Comp Plan update would translate into higher percentage of affordable housing. This, in addition to the adjustment of MFI levels in my first term, have been critical updates that will be played out in the coming years and beyond.

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**Q19**

**Mostly project-based**

Housing is publicly subsidized in two main ways: project-based subsidies (such as Housing Production Trust Fund dollars or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits) that are tied to a unit and reduce its cost for any qualified tenants who live there and tenant-based subsidies (i.e., portable vouchers) that a qualified tenant can use on any market-rate unit. Acknowledging that an even split is not realistic, how do you think the District should divide its public subsidy money between these two methods?

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**Q20**

**Yes**

Would you support amending the District's preservation laws to remove height and mass from the purview of historic review? Under such a proposal, District historic officials would still review materials, aesthetics and compatibility of designated structures, but overall density would be controlled by zoning the same way it is for non-designated structures.

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**Q21**

**None of the above**

If District law were amended to allow the designation of historic districts to be removed, which, if any, of the current districts should have its designation removed?

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**Q22**

**No**

Should apartments be legal District-wide?

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**Q23**

Where in the District do you think residential density should be increased to accommodate the construction of new housing? If you do not think residential density should be increased in the District, please write, "I do not think density should be increased in the District."

Please see the updated Comprehensive Plan for areas in which I think we need additional density.

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**Q24**

**Yes**

The District's current Comprehensive Plan was written in 2006 and amended in 2021. Despite an extensive amendment process, it is still out-of-date, and still restricts density in affluent neighborhoods more than elsewhere. An April 2020 staff report from Office of Planning states that a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan should be complete by 2025 (page 8). Do you commit to supporting the necessary budget and process for a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan by 2025?

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**Q25**

**Creating opportunities for new housing**

In a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan, which of these three options would be your top priority?

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**Q26**

**Yes**

Traditional smart-growth planning principles concentrate high-density construction, including apartment buildings, on major corridors. This, by design, leaves residential areas off of corridors untouched. Do you agree with this approach to the distribution of housing within neighborhoods?

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**Q27**

Where in the District should production, distribution, and repair zoning should be added so as to more fairly balance it across the District? If you do not think PDR zoning should be added in the District, please write, "I do not think PDR zoning should be added in the District."

The District should ensure it has the PDR zoning it needs to function and be vibrant. That is why we are first doing a needs assessment, which may show our needs can be accommodated under existing zoning. If it turns out that additional PDR is needed, we should expand it equitably and with appropriate community engagement through the Comprehensive Plan rewrite.

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**Q28**

**Removing or raising the Height Act everywhere but downtown**

Given the opportunity, how would you amend the District's Height Act?

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**Q29**

**Enough cars**

Do you think there are not enough cars, enough cars, or too many cars in the District?

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**Q30**

**Yes**

Do you think inducing residents and visitors to drive less should be an explicit policy goal of the District?

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**Q31**

**Yes**

Internal data for WMATA estimates that bus delays cost the system about \$14 million per year. Buses are primarily delayed by sitting in single-occupancy vehicle traffic. Bus riders are more frequently Black and brown, and less affluent, than rail riders and drivers. Would you support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for dedicated bus lanes, which make bus service faster and more reliable?

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**Q32**

If yes, how will you, as mayor, ensure that DDOT actually repurposes street space to create dedicated bus lanes?

I have funded and installed Car Free lanes in high-traffic corridors that support improved efficiency in bus travel and create space for bicyclists. We know that dedicated bus lanes make public transportation more efficient and reliable. As we continue reimagining public spaces, these lanes will help us encourage bus and bicycle travel, reduce traffic, and build a greener DC. The Car Free Lanes are part of DDOT's Bus Priority Program initiative to enhance bus speed and reliability across all eight wards. Other Bus Priority Program projects include the H/I Street bus lanes launched in June 2019; the 14th Street NW bus lanes pilot that is currently under construction; and the 16th Street NW bus lanes that will be constructed later this summer. To learn more please visit: <https://ddot.dc.gov/page/bus-priority>.

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**Q33**

**Yes**

A 12-year study, published in 2019, found that protected bike lanes drastically lowered fatal crash rates for all road users (in other words, including for people traveling by means other than bicycle) in Seattle (-60.6%), San Francisco (-49.3%), Denver (-40.3%) and Chicago (-38.2%), among others. The Washington Post recently reported that "lower-income neighborhoods in the District recorded eight times more traffic fatalities in recent years than the city's wealthiest area," and that the "40 traffic fatalities in the nation's capital last year were the most since 2007." Would you, as mayor, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for protected bike lanes?

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**Q34**

If yes, how will you, as mayor, ensure that DDOT actually repurposes street space to create protected bike lanes?

In celebration of Bike to Work Day this year, I was proud to announce that more than 100 miles of bike lanes now exist in the District, a 60 percent increase from when I took office in 2015. In 2015, the District had 63 miles of bike lanes and fewer than six miles of protected bike lanes. Now, there are 104 miles of bike lanes, including 24 miles of protected bike lanes. I am also proud to have put funding in place to add 10 additional miles of protected bike lanes every year. We have more work to do, but I'm proud that DC has become one of the most bike-friendly cities in the nation. We are changing the way people move around our city and building a greener, healthier, and more sustainable DC.

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**Q35**

**Yes**

Road pricing, or congestion pricing, in which motorists pay directly for driving on a particular road or in a particular area, has successfully reduced congestion, improved air quality, and raised money in London, Stockholm, and Singapore by reducing the number of vehicles on the road and improving transit performance. New York will be implementing road pricing in the next few years. However, many drivers are loath to pay for something that they currently get for free. Would you implement road pricing in the District?

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**Q36**

If yes, how would you propose re-investing the \$90 to \$500 million in revenue road pricing is estimated to generate for the District? If no, please write, "I do not support road pricing."

I would re-invest revenue in supporting mass transit, bike lanes, vision zero efforts, equitable transportation options and dedicated bus lanes.

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**Q37**

**Yes**

In 2019, the D.C. Council budgeted \$475,000 for the District Department of Transportation and the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure to conduct a preliminary study of how road pricing in the District could work. As mayor, will you release the study?

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**Q38**

WMATA is facing a \$375 million budget deficit in FY24, as federal support for transit provided during covid-19 is not likely to be renewed. Though the District, Maryland, and Virginia entered into a regional commitment to fund some of WMATA's capital costs year over year, WMATA's operations do not have a similar dedicated funding stream. Given the need to find local solutions, what will you do to assist in closing WMATA's operational funding gap?

The importance of Metro to our region cannot be overstated. I am working regularly with my colleagues in Virginia, Maryland, and the Federal government to ensure that funding is sufficient for Metro's operations.

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**Q39**

**Fare-free transit**

Assuming \$500 million could be invested in either fare-free transit for all users or guaranteed headways of 10 minutes or less on bus lines within D.C., which would you prefer?

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**Q40**

Preventing drivers from killing people will require not just incentives for people to drive less and nudges to make them drive better. It will also require policies that actively reshape the District's transportation systems and its landscape to decrease single-occupancy vehicle trips, and to slow down the speed of those trips when people do make them. Please rank the following policies in the order that you would request your administration to pursue them. If you would not request your staff pursue a specific policy, please select N/A.

Implementing a road-pricing program	<b>5</b>
Increasing the cost to own a car in the District, including RPP and parking registration	<b>N/A</b>
Removing minimum parking requirements in new developments near transit	<b>4</b>
Implementing road diets on arterial streets	
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	<b>3</b>
Regional reciprocity for automated traffic enforcement	<b>6</b>
Building more housing and affordable housing in the District proximate to transit and job centers	<b>2</b>
	<b>1</b>

**Q41**

Please elaborate further on what you will do to ensure that no one is killed by a driver, especially a driver who has demonstrated their repeated failure to comply with traffic laws.

I believe that it is critical to reevaluate the criminal penalties associated with for drivers who repeatedly and dangerously flout our traffic safety laws.

**Q42**

The District's automated traffic enforcement program cannot meaningfully enforce consequences for unsafe driving upon Maryland and Virginia residents, as the District does not have any reciprocity agreement with those states. As mayor, what will you do to facilitate those agreements, and what will you do to implement them?

I have engaged the regional Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to coordinate a meeting and discussion between the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia related to regional enforcement reciprocity. Meetings have begun. I believe it is important that people pay their tickets. And we believe that that reciprocity, including our drivers paying their tickets in Maryland and Virginia is also important.

**Q43**

On-street parking occurs in public space, which means that an on-street parking spot cannot belong to a specific individual, and people park in different places at different times. What do you consider a reasonable threshold for evaluating if street parking is sufficient in any given neighborhood?

**A resident is able to find an available public street parking space within one block in any direction of their residence (about a two- to four-minute walk), most of the time**

**Q44**

DDOT's Bus Priority Plan, which will roll out 51 new bus priority lanes over the next several years, is more ambitious than previous transportation programs proposed by the executive. Do you have a greater proposal than this for transportation in the District?

I established the Bus Priority Program to improve bus speeds and reliability for riders across the District, whether on Metrobus, DC Circulator, or commuter buses. By improving bus service, DDOT is improving mobility and access to opportunities for District residents, workers, and visitors.

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**Q45**

Understanding that that proposal will garner opposition, just as it will garner support, how will you navigate pushback so as to implement it?

This is my plan, I will see it through. There are simply too many benefits to too many people and to our economy to not succeed.

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**Q46**

The District's goal to be carbon-free by 2050 requires most of the reduction of its transportation emissions to come from residents turning existing single-occupancy vehicle trips into transit, walking, and biking trips. Please describe at least one trip you currently take by car (even if you, yourself, are not driving) that you can commit to taking on foot, by bus, by train, or by bike instead.

I typically take a car to drop off my daughter, Miranda, at her DCPS school. It's easy to take the car for my security detail but I can commit to making the walk to her school more often.

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