

# Erin Palmer

## Page 1: Contact information

### Q1

#### Contact information

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## Page 2: Prescreening questions

### Q2

**Yes**

Do you support Mayor Muriel Bowser's goal, announced in 2019, to add 36,000 new units of housing in the District by 2025?

### Q3

**I'll support another housing production goal, and would be willing to propose one myself.**

If successful, the 36,000-unit goal will be met by 2025. However, the District's population is estimated to grow to 987,000 people by 2045, and the region is expected to have a shortfall of about 690,000 housing units by then. Will you support a second goal for housing production in the District by 2045? If the mayor or your colleagues don't propose a production goal, will you propose one yourself?

## Page 3: Questionnaire

**Q4** **Over 100,000**

With 36,000 presumably completed units as a baseline, how many additional units do you think should be built in the District by 2045?

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**Q5** **Yes**

Housing production in D.C. has been uneven and particularly concentrated in certain planning areas, such as Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest. Do you support the mayor’s goal to set production targets in each area of the District to more evenly disperse the construction of new housing?

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**Q6** **Yes**

Should apartments be legal in all residential zones District-wide?

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**Q7**

Council's land use authority is limited: The Home Rule Act states, "the mayor shall be the central planning agency for the District" (page 13), and councilmembers do not, generally, vote up or down on individual developments, unless they will require public financing, such as tax abatements or TIFs. Councilmembers' most direct influence on land use is through the Comprehensive Plan, though they cannot change that unless amendments are proposed by the mayor. However, the council can still act to increase housing production, whether through legislation and budgeting, or by directing the executive to pursue amendments before the zoning commission. Please rank the following policies that would increase housing production in the order that you would request your staff to pursue them, if elected. (This list is purposefully not inclusive of affordability and stabilization policies, which are addressed in subsequent questions.)

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| Legalizing two-unit buildings District-wide   | <b>5</b> |
| Legalizing four-unit buildings District-wide  | <b>4</b> |
| Subsidizing individual homeowners to construct ADUs   | <b>8</b> |
| Increasing the percentage of affordable housing required in public-land dispositions                            | <b>1</b> |
| Incentivizing the conversion of office buildings to residential properties                                      | <b>7</b> |
| Eliminating the Height Act  |          |
| Eliminating parking requirements in new construction  | <b>6</b> |
| Amending the building code to reduce construction costs   | <b>3</b> |
| Legalizing and incentivizing housing above public facilities, such as libraries, rec centers, and fire stations | <b>9</b> |
|   | <b>2</b> |
-

**Q8**

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."

Every Ward has a responsibility to do its part to address the affordable housing crisis in DC. This means that new housing must be built in areas of the District that have historically not done their fair share to accommodate our new neighbors, especially in areas that already have high quality transit and are rich in amenities. Transit-oriented housing provides the opportunity for convenient access to public transportation and reduced car dependency. We have the opportunity to build more housing – including affordable and deeply affordable housing – above public facilities like library and recreation center buildings and on publicly-owned land.

With Ward 3, for example, we need only look to its history to know we can increase the amount of housing that is built. Historic art deco apartments, co-ops, and condos rise above Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin Avenues. There is no reason these same transit corridors cannot accommodate similarly-sized construction today – especially with improved Metro or on high-frequency bus corridors. That same historic density of smaller duplexes, fourplexes, and garden-style apartments that are so valuable in residential neighborhoods near me in Takoma can also be found across DC and should be allowed in more places.

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**Q9**

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

In general, most areas of DC can accommodate increased gentle density. Part of what makes my neighborhood, Takoma, so inviting and walkable is a mix of housing types and density. Historic garden-style apartments are part of a fabric that also includes single family homes. For example, the apartments at 410 Cedar Street were built in 1926 and were preserved as affordable housing through a combination of community and DC efforts that I was part of.

Part of the legacy of the Takoma community in the 1920s was building inviting, affordable spaces first around a railroad and then a Metro stop. When I think about my legacy, I hope that 100 years from now there are projects to preserve and extend the density and affordability that I supported for the future.

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**Q10** **Removing or raising the Height Act entirely**

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

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**Q11** **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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**Q12**

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

- Means-tested or income-restricted,**
  - Subsidized,**
  - Rent-controlled,**
  - Costing no more than 30 percent of one's household income**
- 

**Q13**

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

- Not means-tested or income-restricted,**
  - Unsubsidized,**
  - Not rent-controlled,**
  - Costing more than 30 percent of one's household income**
-

**Q14**

What is, and is not, within the scope of the council chair's authority to produce more affordable housing in the District? Or, describe not what you will do to produce more affordable housing in the District, but, rather, what the council chair, regardless of who they are, can do to produce more affordable housing in the District.

The Council Chair largely controls Council procedures and rules - including Council committee subject matter areas and who serves as chair and members of these committees - and through that impacts affordable housing significantly. We know that the chair of the Council's housing committee holds a lot of power over what legislation does and, perhaps more importantly, does not move forward, and that there have been instances where there is at least an appearance that committee membership is assigned (or removed) based on a Councilmember's specific policy positions - like when Councilmembers Brianne Nadeau and Trayon White were removed from the housing committee shortly after proposing rent control legislation.

My DC Council Accountability Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>) proposes improving the process of forming and assigning membership to Council committees to assure neutrality, expertise, and consistency and to avoid the appearance of impropriety. It also proposes a number of mechanisms to strengthen the Council's institutional knowledge base and oversight functions, including expanding dedicated, nonpartisan Committee support staff to ensure continuity, retention of institutional knowledge, and additional capacity to legislate and conduct oversight, as well as re-instituting a comprehensive, nonpartisan, and objective research service to assist the Council in crafting legislative solutions to DC's challenges, including robust consideration of best practices across jurisdictions; encourage holistic knowledge building across Council offices; help the Council better target public funds toward evidence-based programs; and supplement the research work of the Council's Office of the Budget Director. My Plan proposes greater use of existing entities, like the DC Auditor's Office and the Council Office of Racial Equity, to improve and enhance oversight and ensure the Council is engaging with racial equity impact assessments. And it proposes more timely release of the Chair's budget proposals so that Councilmembers have a greater ability to engage with the budget.

In addition to these process improvements, the Council Chair - like other Councilmembers - can introduce and support needed legislation to expand the production of affordable housing. This can include greater reporting and accountability requirements for the Housing Production Trust Fund to ensure it is meeting its statutory mandate to produce deeply affordable housing; Green New Deal-style legislation related to social housing and building standards; and more stringent requirements on the disposition of public land. The proposals in my DC Council Accountability Plan would strengthen each Councilmember's ability to introduce legislation built on nationwide best practices and data that will result in the increased production of affordable housing.

Ultimately, the Council Chair can center data, research, and nonpartisan, institutionalized support to really dig into nationwide best practices and big ideas that can meaningfully address housing production in DC.

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## Q15

The D.C. Housing Authority is an independent entity, and its debt is likely too great for it to realistically be moved under the purview of the District government. Given this, how would you, as council chair, answer calls to "fix" public housing?

As Council Chairwoman, I would lead and equip the Council to do three things: fund the DC Housing Authority's public housing and voucher programs; legislate to prevent the Housing Authority from repeating its failures; and conduct regular and sustained oversight to ensure that the Housing Authority complies with the law and its mandate to provide safe, stable, and secure housing to DC's low-income residents.

**Funding.** We must make regular and sustained investments in public housing so residents can lead healthy and dignified lives. The DC Housing Authority has only recently started receiving more local funding, and that funding is not level and recurring. Sustained funding is necessary so the agency can plan its rehabilitation and redevelopment projects. It also means requiring regular reporting and audits on how that money is being used to improve the lives of DC residents.

We also must fund the Local Rent Supplement Program. If the federal government is not going to give DC federal dollars to pull families off the 38,000+ person waitlist, the DC Council has to step up. We cannot continue to have waitlists for our most critical housing programs closed for nearly a decade. It is simply unacceptable.

**Legislation.** As Council Chairwoman, I will lead the DC Council in legislative reform of the DC Housing Authority. First, the Council must pass legislation to stop the displacement of public housing residents. Year after year, we have seen public housing residents displaced from their homes that then sit vacant for years (and even decades) while DC families are left wondering if they will ever return. This happened at Temple Courts, Barry Farm, and Park Morton to name a few, and now residents fear that history is doomed to repeat itself at Greenleaf Gardens. The Council can no longer sit back and watch this happen. Instead, it must require the Housing Authority to prioritize build-first models of redevelopment and guarantee every public housing resident a robust and unequivocal right to return to redeveloped properties within a reasonable timeframe.

Second, the Council must legislate to ensure that the Housing Authority operates as a truly independent agency and that its Board of Commissioners conducts business transparently, ethically, and with meaningful community input. This means passing legislation to break up the Mayor's majority on the Board. It also means requiring the Board to have a code of ethics it abides by and enforces, as well as rules of procedure for how it will conduct business and collect community input before making decisions.

**Oversight.** Finally, I will equip the DC Council to conduct vigorous and constant oversight to make sure that the Housing Authority is meeting its critically important mission to safely and stably house DC's lowest income residents. I know that good government is an ongoing discipline. That is why I've created a detailed DC Council Accountability Plan: <https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>. It lays out a number of tangible steps I would take as Council Chairwoman to better achieve robust, dedicated oversight, including enhancing and increasing use of the DC Auditor's Office and the DC Council Office of Racial Equity, as well as nonpartisan, institutionalized support staff and resources so the Council can conduct sustained oversight across offices and build and retain institutional knowledge.

You can read more about my take on fixing DC public housing on my website: <https://erinfordc.medium.com/letting-our-housing-crumble-dc-housing-authority-falling-into-disrepair-2d4502601e17>.

**Q16**

How many units of housing do you think should be built in the District by 2045 for households making between:

0-30 percent MFI (\$0-\$27,100 per year for a household of one)?	<b>35,000</b>
30-50 percent MFI (\$27,100-\$45,150 per year for a household of one)?	<b>25,000</b>
50-80 percent MFI (\$45,150 to \$72,250 per year for a household of one)?	<b>25,000</b>
80-120 percent MFI (\$72,250 to \$108,350 per year for a household of one)?	<b>15,000</b>

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**Q17**

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?

Oversight is essential to ensure housing affordability and to make sure money is spent well, agencies follow laws and regulations, and we are achieving our goals. The absence of rigorous oversight has led to the Housing Production Trust Fund – one of our primary affordable housing tools – to continuously fail to meet the requirements to fund housing for those most in need.

My DC Council Accountability Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>) contains a number of proposals that would improve the Council’s ability to conduct meaningful oversight, including increased use of and engagement with the recommendations of the DC Auditor’s Office. In addition, these proposals would equip the Council to conduct better oversight over multiple agencies and across Council committees - a challenge we face in a number of respects.

Improving delivery of affordable housing via the Housing Production Trust Fund also requires additional investments in the Local Rent Supplement Program, which helps cover the ongoing costs of operating and maintaining these affordable units.

I also support legislation to improve accountability for the Housing Production Trust Fund, including greater reporting requirements to publish information about applications and awardees and post-completion reports. The Council should approve the Housing Production Trust Fund Transparency Amendment Act of 2021, which would require the Mayor to submit a waiver request to the Council if the District Department of Housing and Community Development has not received sufficient housing project proposals to meet the statutory requirement for deeply affordable housing.

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**Q18**

As council chair, how will you 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)?

Similar to my answer above, my DC Council Accountability Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>) contains a number of proposals that would improve the Council's ability to make laws and conduct meaningful oversight of our various affordable housing programs, including the Housing Production Trust Fund and the Housing Preservation Fund, that impact the delivery of housing for residents who make between 50 percent AMI and 80 percent AMI.

As an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, we've welcomed a significant number of new and preserved housing units in our Commission area that are deeply affordable, affordable, and market rate. Part of our strategy is welcoming new development and pushing for additional gentle density that brings along with it greater affordability, either through inclusionary zoning or community benefit agreements.

The District Office of the Attorney General has proposed a number of zoning text amendments that would enhance the ability to produce more affordable housing, including lowering the income thresholds for inclusionary zoning, removing the downtown exemption from inclusionary zoning, exempting affordable units from minimum parking requirements, holding developers to modern inclusionary zoning requirements. Our Advisory Neighborhood Commission worked with the new Office of the Attorney General Land Use Section to propose the text amendment to ensure modern inclusionary zoning goals are met in planned unit developments. And I think there's a significant opportunity to modernize inclusionary zoning standards, and the proposals in my DC Council Accountability Plan would assist the Council in this work.

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**Q19**

As council chair, how will you 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)?

Please refer to Question 18 and Question 19. I would also add that easing zoning and other requirements to allow more gentle density, particularly around transit hubs, would provide greater opportunity for more housing production at all income levels.

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**Q20**

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.

**One 10-unit project in Forest Hills for residents making under 30 (\$27,100) AMI, and one 40-unit market-rate project in Bellevue**

I prefer this scenario because:  
This scenario best achieves the goals of affordable housing in a resources and amenities rich area and additional market rate - avoiding concentration of affordable housing - in Ward 8. I would note that deeply affordable housing often also requires social support services, and for residents to succeed we need to invest in those services as well. And that neighbors east of the Anacostia River often express a desire for development that includes retail and other neighborhood-serving amenities.



**Q21**

In the Office of Planning's Housing Framework for Equity and Growth, released in October 2019, Mayor Bowser set 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 all planning areas meet the stated targets by 2050?

The varied numbers and concentration in Far Southeast and Southwest are notable. As expected, we are concentrating affordable housing in specific areas, and our most resource rich areas are contributing very little. This is just one representation of the "every map of DC is the same" principle. And there needs to be intentional work for balance and equity.

My Advisory Neighborhood Commission is within Rock Creek East, which notably has the highest number of affordable housing after Far Southeast and Southwest. This is at least in part the result of intentional action by our Commission to welcome additional housing in our Commission area and push for more affordable and deeply affordable housing that comes with greater density. I started the first-ever Housing Justice Committee for our Commission, and our focus on affordability has had an impact.

It is also illustrative of how just setting a goal is not enough to actually deliver affordable housing. When I was elected to my Commission in 2018 with seven new Commissioners, our Commission had a reputation for being hostile, dysfunctional, and unwelcoming. We reset the narrative about what is possible in our community from the ground up, and I firmly believe that we can do similarly in other communities in DC. That consensus-building work is unglamorous, but it also produces real results - that's why there's a growing network of local elected officials in DC who are changing the narrative. I am proud that more than 70 of them have endorsed my campaign.

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**Q22**

The Committee on Housing and Executive Administration has failed to advance any reform to the District's existing rent stabilization policies. Check the boxes to indicate the policies for which you would vote:

- Make four-unit buildings subject to rent stabilization,**
- Make buildings built prior to 2005 subject to rent stabilization**
- ,
- Peg eligibility for rent stabilization to a dynamic date, so that new buildings are subject to rent stabilization after 15 years**
- ,
- Allow only one increase per year, with notice, for any D.C. rental housing that's exempt from rent stabilization**
- ,
- Eliminate voluntary agreements that take rents to market-rate**
- ,
- Implement stronger oversight of all landlord petitions filed with the Department of Housing and Community Development**
- ,
- Clarify what types of landlord upgrades qualify for capital improvements petitions**
- ,
- Narrow the scope of hardship petitions; stagger allowable increases; and make increases temporary, rather than permanent**
- ,
- Make rent increases under substantial rehabilitation petitions temporary rather than permanent**
- ,
- Cap annual rent increases at the level of inflation, or consumer price index, and eliminate the extra two percent allowed under current law**
- ,
- Eliminate vacancy increases**

**Q23**

The public perception of the Committee on Housing and Executive Administration is quite poor; it is generally accepted that its current leadership is not proactively generating solutions to housing affordability and access. How will you ensure that, in the future, the committee creates policy addressing the need for more housing at all income levels, across the District, and budgets for it accordingly, while performing higher-quality oversight?

My DC Council Accountability Plan is a comprehensive plan to make every part of the Council function better, and that includes the Committee on Housing and Executive Administration, which has been one of the worst examples of how mismanaged Council Committees have been. The current Council Chair removed the Ward 8 and Ward 1 Councilmembers from the housing committee for proposing reforms to DC's rent control program, denying representation to the city's most dense Ward and all communities east of the Anacostia River on this critical committee.

I am dedicated to building relationships and empowering other Councilmembers, including through improving the process of forming DC Council committees and assigning committee chairs and membership to assure neutrality, expertise, and consistency and to avoid the appearance of impropriety. The shoe-horning in of "Executive Administration" is a result of a lack of committee stability that comes from the practice of creating and abolishing committees based on unwritten rules and favors.

We must prioritize housing through enhanced oversight, including the reforms included in my DC Council Accountability Plan:

Improving the process of forming and assigning membership to Council Committees to assure neutrality, expertise, and consistency and to avoid the appearance of impropriety (e.g., seeming to be motivated by obtaining a desired vote; punishing or rewarding Councilmembers for their vote; limiting certain Councilmembers from influencing specific issues), including:

Collaborating with fellow Councilmembers to build a core list of standing Committees and agencies that fall within each Committee's purview to reflect Council priorities; ensure consistent, continual oversight and legislation; and avoid the appearance of favoritism;

Expanding dedicated, nonpartisan Committee support staff to ensure continuity, retention of institutional knowledge, and additional capacity to legislate and conduct oversight;

Instituting a neutral Committee membership and chair appointment process, such as seniority bidding, a process used by many legislative bodies across the country that adds stability, expertise, and neutrality;

Re-instituting a comprehensive, nonpartisan, and objective research service to assist the Council in crafting legislative solutions to DC's challenges, including robust consideration of best practices across jurisdictions; encourage holistic knowledge building across Council offices; help the Council better target public funds toward evidence-based programs; and supplement the research work of the Council's Office of the Budget Director; and

Enhancing and increasing the use of the DC Auditor's Office, including through additional hearings on important audit findings and enhanced Committee consideration and use of recommendations, as a tool to ensure robust, consistent oversight to improve agency performance.

**Q24**

The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act has historically enabled the cooperative purchase of apartment buildings that are put up for sale by a tenants' association. There are many ins and outs of the TOPA process, one of which is the ability of tenants to take buyouts, if the interested buyer is willing to make them. Buyouts have skyrocketed, to, in some deals, \$60,000 per unit, making TOPA, functionally, not an anti-displacement policy but, rather, a tenant equity policy. Do you think that this is a suitable evolution of TOPA, or should the law be amended to either formalize or restrict this?

**TOPA should be amended to formalize this.,**

Please explain your selected response.:

Tenants, especially tenants who have lived in a neighborhood or building for a long time, should be allowed to earn "equity" from the sale of a building if that is their choice. Just as a homeowner, they have invested in and contributed to their communities. There is risk of developers taking advantage of tenants who do not fully understand their rights or the realities of the rental housing market to entice tenants to accept buyouts that are fairly low and will not allow them to afford rent (or a house) in another neighborhood. Before any buyout is approved, tenants should have the right to talk with a lawyer or other housing advocate to ensure accepting a buyout is the right choice for them.

**Q25**

**Yes**

The D.C. Council voted to exempt single-family home sales from TOPA in 2017. As council chair, would you support reinstating single-family TOPA?

**Q26**

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

We must be willing to meaningfully consider, implement, and expand affordable housing tools like limited-equity co-ops and community land trusts, as well as social housing, particularly when we are talking about government-owned land. I led my Advisory Neighborhood Commission in encouraging greater consideration and discussion of community land trusts and social housing in our Resolution addressing the Comprehensive Plan: <https://resolutions.anc.dc.gov/ViewResolution.aspx?Id=ELM7SSG1uWDvHdMz6MvSjw==>.

Our current leadership has been too quick to permanently dispose of large tracts of land in a manner that limits the ongoing benefit to the community. DC must be intentional and dedicated in how it is using public land. I strongly support a focus on affordable housing and neighborhood-serving amenities, but also believe we need to re-envision the ownership of public land through ground leases or hopefully community land trusts. We know there is need for affordable and deeply affordable housing in DC, as well as green space that is open and available to the general public, but oftentimes selling for a nominal amount to a developer creates poor incentives for prioritizing both affordability and environmental stewardship. The greatest profit can often be made in development directly on the water (like the Wharf), but that is exactly the type of space where we can maximize housing, including affordable housing, and community-serving green space. Switching to a community land ownership model changes the incentives around where and what we build and why.

There are some challenges for our current limited-equity co-ops in terms of funding and maintenance, and more work is needed to ensure their sustainability. In addition, we need to invest in organizations that can help tenant associations perform the building and financial analyses to determine if conversion to a co-op is feasible.

**Q27**

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?

I think the District Opportunity to Purchase Act is one of the best tools that we have to preserve affordable housing and it is disappointing it has been so consistently underutilized. The restriction on the "affordability" of the units should be reconsidered so DC can purchase a wider variety of buildings. And we should pair this with affordability performance standards for the production of units after purchase to ensure that we have high standards for use of government funds under the Act.

The proposals in my DC Council Accountability Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>), including a nonpartisan research service, would assist in considering ways to improve the District Opportunity to Purchase Act in light of nationwide best practices.

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**Q28**

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?

Too often, inclusionary zoning is treated like our primary affordable housing tool, when instead it is a supplement. It is good that we are producing some affordable housing in most new developments, but we will never meet our affordability needs or even keep up with the loss of affordable units using just inclusionary zoning.

We also need to recognize that our standards for affordability have evolved over time and will continue to evolve. That is part of why the work of the Housing Justice Committee that I founded led to the Office of the Attorney General's Land Use Section to propose a zoning text amendment in recognition of the evolving standards of affordability. That text amendment asks that Planned Unit Developments follow newer, higher inclusionary zoning standards if they have changed from when the project was initially proposed. This ensures that large projects in DC continue to meet high standards and maximizes the production of affordable housing using inclusionary zoning.

The proposals in my DC Council Accountability Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>) would assist in the continual assessment of maximizing the utility of our inclusionary zoning requirements.

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**Q29**

**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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**Q30**

**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 more greatly restricts density in affluent neighborhoods 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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**Q31**

**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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**Q32**

**No**

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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**Q33**

**Yes**

The mayor has committed the District to attempting a fair distribution of affordable housing production across planning areas by 2050. More unevenly distributed than affordable housing is land zoned for production, distribution, and repair—basically, industrial uses. PDR zones are largely concentrated in the Near Northeast planning area. In a Comprehensive Plan rewrite, would you support a fair-share approach to the location of parcels zoned for PDR, which would necessitate adding PDR zoning to planning areas where there currently is none or very little, such as Near Northwest and Rock Creek West?

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**Q34**

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

Despite claims by the current Council Chair otherwise, we do not have a shortage of industrial land. In fact, based on a 2014 study, a large percentage of PDR land was being used for non-PDR uses. So - to me - the question is less about relocating industrial land as opposed to minimizing it for better use, like meeting our housing and deeply affordable housing goals.

Industrial land is heavily concentrated in Ward 5, and we should work to minimize the impacts of pollution on our Ward 5 neighbors. I've been in Brentwood several times, and you can see and hear and smell the pollution. The siting of industrial land and the concentration of industrial pollutants is rooted in racist land use and zoning policies, worsened by decades of chronic disinvestment in government services - things like waste collection, litter prevention, and green space - that might otherwise help mitigate the impacts.

**Q35**

**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, as council chair, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for dedicated bus lanes, which make bus service faster and more reliable?

**Q36**

**DDOT should repurpose whichever lane its staff believe is best on any given street.**

If yes, how do you think DDOT should prioritize repurposing street space to create dedicated bus lanes?

**Q37**

**Yes**

A 12-year study, published in 2019, found that protected bike lanes drastically lowered fatal crash rates \*for all road users\* 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 council chair, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for protected bike lanes?

**Q38**

**DDOT should repurpose whichever lane their staff believe is best on any given street.**

If yes, how do you think DDOT should prioritize repurposing street space to create protected bike lanes?

**Q39**

**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 loathe to pay for something that they currently get for free. Would you, as council chair, support road pricing as a means to reduce congestion to speed up transit, improve air quality, and raise revenue?

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**Q40**

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."

As noted in Question 43, WMATA is facing a large deficit, and congestion pricing revenue can help us with sustained local funding.

We have to focus our efforts on improving our transit systems and infrastructure and ensuring they deliver equitably. That means fully funding and rigorous oversight of the District Department of Transportation's plans to ensure that they deliver separated bus facilities so that all residents have access to high-quality transit – even if they don't live by a train station. We have to explore more ways to ensure frequent, easy bus service – like subsidizing pilots for off-board fare collection, fare free routes, and all-door boarding.

I'm also a strong supporter of Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen's Metro for DC proposal to reinvest in DC bus service where it is most needed and provide access to free transit. In addition, I have proposed in my Safe Streets and Public Transportation Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/erin-palmers-safe-streets-infrastructure-public-transportation-plan-2977cf283e34>) and led my Advisory Neighborhood Commission in advocating for lowering barriers to and expanding the Kids Ride Free program to ensure everyone has better access to free transit.

I also support expanding the DC Streetcar, and I believe the service provided must be frequent, reliable, fast, and cheap. We know there have been historic challenges with the DC Streetcar. Its main failure has been one of political will and commitment. Because of an inability to dedicate a right-of-way to the Streetcar's operation, it is essentially a failed project. What was once the opening leg of a citywide network of dedicated, fast, modern transit is now an orphaned novelty. It's a true loss. I would insist that any transit plan for Benning Road deliver high-quality transit in a dedicated right-of-way.

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**Q41**

**Yes**

In 2019, the council budgeted \$475,000 for a road pricing study. The study is complete, but Mayor Bowser has not yet released it. Do you think the study should be made public?

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**Q42**

If "yes," how would you, as council chair, get the executive to release the report? If "no," please write, "I do not think the study should be made public."

I have previously called for the release of this report as part of my Safe Streets Infrastructure and Public Transportation Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/erin-palmers-safe-streets-infrastructure-public-transportation-plan-2977cf283e34>). If the report is complete, the simplest way to force it to be public is to request it from the Executive and put it in the Council record. If they will not respond to a voluntary request, the Council can subpoena it and enter it in the record. (I've also called for auditing the Council's oversight activities and tools, including use of subpoenas in my DC Council Accountability Plan - <https://erinfordc.medium.com/dc-council-accountability-plan-bda504ae31f1>).

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**Q43**

WMATA will be 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, as council chair, to assist in closing WMATA's operational funding gap?

I am focused on finding creative solutions to ensure Metro continues to operate as an essential service. I believe the DC Council has a critical role in doing that. Yet, our current Council Chair allowed Metro to languish with Jack Evans as his Board appointee, who was disinterested in Metro improvements for a half-decade and ultimately kicked off the Board for his corruption.

In addition, I believe Metro should – and have asked Metro to seek – the full three percent subsidy increase from every jurisdiction every year. In the current context, the idea that Metro is leaving money on the table by not asking for the limited subsidy increases that jurisdictions have already essentially agreed to is beyond comprehension.

Beyond the Metro for DC proposal, which I fully support, my Safe Streets Infrastructure and Public Transportation Plan (<https://erinfordc.medium.com/erin-palmers-safe-streets-infrastructure-public-transportation-plan-2977cf283e34>) proposes several innovative ways to support Metro, including:

Expanding Kids Ride Free to automatically mail SmarTrip cards to every eligible public and public charter school student in DC (instead of requiring school coordination and pickup), allowing elementary students attending Title One schools receive a Parents Ride Free card that allows them to accompany their child, and explicitly encouraging use of these cards outside of school hours;

Requiring colleges and universities in DC, including the University of the District of Columbia, to participate in the U-Pass program to expand transit access for students; and

Increasing access to discounted fares for seniors by using the District of Columbia Public Libraries as a Senior SmarTrip application and distribution point, like in Montgomery County, Maryland.

As noted in Question 40, potential revenue from congestion pricing can provide sustained local funding for WMATA. I am also open to exploring other ways to make sure that we close the funding gap for Metro, including funding targeted to additional service in DC as local routes rather than separately contracting them.

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**Q44**

**Yes**

Do you support Councilmember Charles Allen's Metro for D.C. proposal, which would "put a recurring \$100 balance to D.C. residents' SmarTrip cards every month and make a \$10 million annual investment in improving bus service and infrastructure in the District"?

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**Q45**

**Guaranteed headways of 10 minutes or less within D.C.**

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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## Q46

Pick a major street in the District that does not currently have a pending transportation project. Describe what you envision for it, and explain how you would, as council chair, work with the District Department of Transportation to implement that vision.

My choice is East Capitol Street, in part because of the stark and glaring disparities that exist in our treatment of the communities it runs through and how it is emblematic of disinvestment in certain communities - even at the cost of lives. It's true there are proposed projects for East Capitol Street, including the 2011 Far Northeast Livability Study, a 2013 East Capitol Street Pedestrian Safety Study with extensive proposals, and even an attempt to turn it into the 2021 East Capitol Street Safety and Mobility project, which is now way overdue in getting to 30% design.

This isn't uncommon. Almost every arterial in DC has some sort of proposal, somewhere in some document that has either been put in a drawer or ignored far too long or is stuck somewhere in the appropriations logjam. That is characteristic of one of the struggles I had in answering this question: the term "pending transportation project." Without scale or threshold, you disqualify almost every major street in some way or another - whether it's a minor intersection reconstruction or a hypothetical huge project like a deckover. This is a continual issue with the District Department of Transportation: what communities get their projects unstuck and how, how studies turn into concrete action across DC, and how we do it in an equitable manner.

East Capitol, where it begins between the Supreme Court and Library of Congress, is not a perfect street. It is one lane in each direction, but the bike lanes are unprotected, to preserve car parking along the length of the street. But it is reasonably slow and succeeds in prioritizing the communities along its length. Additional traffic calming, like raised crosswalks, serve as an attempt to slow down traffic alongside Lincoln Park and warn drivers that children are at play.

As we exit the wealthier neighborhoods, the changes are damning. The road splits to go around RFK stadium, moving to multiple lanes in each direction. Despite a recent reconstruction project, the Whitney Young Bridge remains highway-style with three lanes in each direction. After crossing the river, it plunges down through underpasses and vehicle speeds accelerate. When traffic rises out from the underpasses they are moving extremely fast, directly in front of Benning-Stoddert recreation center and playground. Unlike Lincoln Park, there are little to no efforts for traffic calming - despite the death of a child in 2019 and a serious injury to another in 2020 in front of the play area.

Proceeding further east, the road acts as a barrier between the community and Fort Chaplin Park (which in and of itself is often uninviting due to poor maintenance by the National Park Service). Then the intersection with Benning Road is home to a Metro station, a dangerous tangled mess that is confusing to all road users and hostile to pedestrians. Further east, it becomes a pure suburban-style freeway as the road gets even wider, despite encountering another Metro station, Capitol Heights on the border with Maryland.

It is clear that East Capitol Street needs help and is representative of how we systematically disinvest in Black communities in DC. I will bring a renewed focus as Council Chair to unsticking projects that benefit communities with the most need.

The proposals from the District Department of Transportation on East Capitol Street aren't bad per se, they just aren't good enough. We have to have significant traffic calming and roadway narrowing to create safety for our communities - but the proposals are still eight lanes wide at some points. Portions of the bike lane are unprotected, a hostile environment for anyone who has seen the volume of traffic along the road. The project doesn't actually touch one of the most awful sections - from RFK to Benning-Stoddert - which means that even though the project proposes some improvements in front of Benning-Stoddert, vehicles will be moving at highway speeds when they encounter them.

Part of how I would work with the District Department of Transportation is to bring a new focus to these issues as Council Chair. Our current Council Chair is rarely, if ever, seen in Transportation oversight hearings and this is an issue that I view as critical. I have also committed to being a citywide official focused on equity - someone not solely focused on the loudest voices in the room. My DC Council Accountability Plan proposes building out more in-house Council expertise through dedicated committee staff and a non-partisan professional research agency to aid in agency oversight. By allowing the Executive to hold exclusive expertise in areas like

this, we cede the critical role the Council can play in shaping projects and conducting oversight.

Clear, consistent follow up on existing recommendations has to be a part of the Council's role. The idea that children continue to be killed and seriously injured along a stretch of road that first had a safety study in 2011 shows just how broken the District Department of Transportation's processes are. The Department also has to be held accountable to ensure they are presenting the best plans possible. While I acknowledge their expertise, they are too often timid and don't present plans and proposals that actually deliver maximum benefit to the community. Aggressive Council oversight can provide cover for the Department to push plans that truly benefit the community.

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#### Q47

Reducing traffic deaths 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 staff to pursue them.

Implementing a road-pricing program	6
Increasing the cost to own a car in the District, including RPP and parking registration	5
Removing minimum parking requirements in new developments near transit	3
Implementing road diets on arterial streets	1
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	7
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	8
Regional reciprocity for automated traffic enforcement	4
Building more housing and affordable housing in the District proximate to transit and job centers	2

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#### Q48

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 the threshold beneath which it is reasonable to park in a neighborhood, most of the time?

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

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#### Q49

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 are not the driver) that you can commit to taking on foot, by bus, by train, or by bike instead.

I do not drive, so this is a harder question for me. I am not a confident cyclist, however, so I think that mid-range trips that involve the transportation of items - like shopping - by bike would be a good challenge for me and a commitment I can make.