



Ward 7 Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 2024 Ward 7 Democrats Candidate Forum for candidates in the Democratic Primary for the **Ward 7 Council seat**. Below is a pre-Forum questionnaire that will give you the opportunity to expand on your position and goals in depth and afford our membership the opportunity to truly understand your positions.

Please respond no later than **11:59pm on Wednesday, March 13, 2024. Timely completion and submission of this questionnaire is a prerequisite to participate in the Candidate Forum.**

Candidate Information

Your responses will be posted on the Ward 7 Dems webpage. Please provide a headshot of the candidate.

Candidate Name: **Wendell Felder**

Current Neighborhood: **Benning Heights**

Candidate website: **www.WendellForWard7.org**

Candidate Twitter: **@WendellForWard7**

Candidate IG: **@WendellForWard7**

Candidate Facebook: **Wendell for Ward 7; www.facebook.com/wendellforward7**

Other social media: **N/A**

General Questions

1. What makes you the right selection for the Democratic nomination for Ward 7 Councilmember?

*Experiencing poverty and the impact of a flawed judicial system ignited my passion for **public safety, economic development, and city services**. As a fourth-generation Washingtonian, I've dedicated my career to serving the District.*

*Over the past 3 years, **I've had the opportunity to proudly lead the Ward 7 Dems and serve as Chair**. During my tenure, we focused on **voter engagement, registration, and participation**.*

Some highlights include:

- *Amending the organization's bylaws to **create a more fair and inclusive governing body**.*
- *Honored the legacy of Ed Potillo by **providing winter coats to over 200 individuals** in Ward 7.*

- **Publicly testified against** the Voter, Ownership, Integrity, Choice, and Equity (VOICE) Amendment Act.
- Led a coordinated effort with other leaders across the ward in the Redistricting process that **secured nearly 9,400 new residents to Ward 7**.
- **Co-hosted** a Voter Registration and Engagement Kick-Ball Classic with the Ward 8 Dems.
- **Revamped the organization's brand** to reflect attract a larger audience.
- **Raised over \$50,000** during various fundraisers:
 - **Annual Summer Backyard BBQ**
 - **Lorraine Whitlock scholarship event for Ward 7 college-bound youth**
 - **WARD 7 and 8 Champions of Change Dinner** which resulted in over \$23k raised.

My personal and professional experience uniquely qualify me to tackle the most pressing issues facing Ward 7.

2. How would you build relationships with the Council, Mayor, and Ward 7 Candidates who were unsuccessful in their bid to ensure that the needs of Ward 7 residents are met?

*I've had the opportunity to work in numerous roles within the Executive Office of the Mayor, which is one of the things that uniquely positions me to lead Ward 7 among the other candidates. These experiences have enabled me to **develop excellent working relationships with the DC Council and other elected officials** across the District. From day one, I will leverage these relationships to make an impact on the legislative process on behalf of Ward 7.*

*Regarding candidates who are unsuccessful in their bid, **if elected, I would host a unity meeting following the election to discuss the next steps**. I would also commit to regular meetings with those individuals to leverage each candidate's collective power and expertise, figure out how to elevate their priorities, and work together collectively.*

Education

In recent years, Ward 7 has faced significant challenges in public education, including disparities in academic achievement, access to resources, and support for special education. If elected to the Ward 7 Council seat, what specific measures will you implement to address these educational disparities and ensure that all children in Ward 7 have equitable access to high-quality education and support services?

*We need bold and visionary leadership to address the challenges in public education. **I'm ready to fight for fair access to resources and opportunities for our students, their families, and the teachers and staff who support them**. That's why I wrote the **Ward 7 Recovery Plan**. After the pandemic and years of our schools being overlooked, it's time to reinvest in neighborhood schools & growing adult learning.*

As your next Ward 7 Councilmember, I am committed to:

- ***Creative collaborative solutions:*** I will establish a Ward 7 Educators Council to foster collaboration between principals, teachers, and other educational experts who can share ideas and find ways to help our students succeed.
- ***Securing school resources and encouraging lifelong learning:*** I am committed to fighting for new legislation for how our schools are funded to better protect resources over time. I'll fight to secure funding for programs that deters the youth from skipping school, and for modernizing school buildings.
- ***Enhance educational experiences outside of the traditional classroom setting:*** Expand current out-of-school time programming and fund innovative before and after-school programs, with a particular emphasis on funding programs within schools located in Wards 7 and 8 through a matched donation program.
- ***Expanding learning opportunities:*** I'll fight to reinstate a home economics curriculum and apprenticeship opportunities that empower students with a wide range of skills and different ways to succeed in the future.

Economic Development

In light of the current economic landscape in Ward 7, as Ward 7 Councilmember, what innovative measures would you propose to bolster economic development in Ward 7?

*Creating a true downtown in Ward 7 is an immediate priority of mine. If elected, I will fight to ensure Ward 7 gets its fair share of resources that other wards benefit from. **I plan to introduce legislation that supports inclusive, responsible, and equitable development that improves community engagement while creating opportunities for Ward 7 business owners.***

We must attract businesses that will make our commercial corridors like Nannie Helen Burroughs and Minnesota Ave unique destinations that encourage 24/7 foot traffic.

As your next Ward 7 councilmember I commit to:

- ***Introduce legislation that establishes long-term commitments to **support the revitalization of Ward 7 economic corridors and stalled development projects.*****
- ***Collaborate with the Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the Office of Planning (OP) to **conduct a Ward Wide Development Plan that is community-driven and outlines both short and long-term development and growth strategies.*****
- ***Introduce legislation to provide incentives for businesses to relocate or expand in underserved areas like Ward 7.***
- ***Work collaboratively with the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) and DC Council to **ensure that the redevelopment of RFK Stadium is community-responsive and beneficial to all residents, including marginalized and underrepresented populations.*****

Housing

In October of 2023, the agencies that fund HPAP (the District's Primary First-time homebuyers' program), revised their distribution requirements to be based on a "first come first serve basis." By January of 2024, all funds were exhausted. This development shook lenders, Realtors, and especially, first time home buyers. As Ward 7 Councilmember, what specific measures and/or initiatives would you champion to improve homeownership opportunities for individuals and families who would like to make our Ward their home?

*Unfortunately, a program that once provided a model for urban cities to follow now provides relatively little benefit to DC residents. DC has grown increasingly unaffordable. Despite this, available housing in Ward 7 and 8 remains the most affordable options due to a lack of investment in the respective communities. **Ward 7 residents deserve access to ownership opportunities that are not only affordable but also in communities that receive adequate and timely economic investment.** To improve homeownership opportunities, we must aid in maintaining homeownership.*

As your next Ward 7 councilmember I commit to:

- ***Providing support to owners of older properties encourages a culture of aging in place in DC as opposed to the current trend of displacement. Helping owners navigate grant and lending programs for property improvements and modifications.***
- ***Working with the Department of Housing and Community Development, and other District agencies to ensure the proper spend down of the CARES ACT allocation for residents facing foreclosure. Supporting outreach to Ward 7 residents needing foreclosure mitigation relief.***
- ***Advocating for the HPAP program to previously allocated rates and supporting the administering agencies in a program redesign to buy down interest rates to control for market inflation and increase affordability.***

Public Safety

Ward 7 and the entire city is experiencing an increase in crime. What would you identify as the core causes of this spike and what legislative tools would you suggest that could stop the increase and address the root causes?

*We all share a common desire to feel safe in our community. With recent inflated crime rates, **unfortunately, a safe community is not our reality.** In response to the killing of George Floyd, we saw a change in attitude and laws in relation to policing. This change has fractured our public safety ecosystem. **We must focus on ensuring our police force is staffed well, supporting established intervention programs, and ensuring accountability.***

As your next Ward 7 councilmember I commit to:

- ***Bolster the Metropolitan Police Department by Reviving the Live Near Your Work Program:*** This initiative will offer matching grants to assist with down payment and closing costs, encouraging police officers to live within the communities they serve. The goal is to increase the force to 4,000 officers, This boost will improve response time, police presence, case closures, and our capacity to handle national security matters affecting the District. It will also improve community-police relations.
- ***Strengthen and Expand Violence Intervention Programs and Services:*** By increasing funding to existing violence intervention programs that have demonstrated success and investing in new evidence-based and innovative solutions, we can effectively respond to and interrupt violence that has already occurred and/or is likely to occur. For example, implementing a Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) that targets 500 of the city's most violent offenders will work to decrease overall violence in communities, making them safer for residents.
- ***Invest in Violence Prevention Programs and Services that Address the Root Causes of Violence:*** By providing at-risk school-aged youth and their families with trauma-informed wrap-around services and supports that address the root causes of violence, we can prevent the likelihood of violence occurring in the first place. For example, by increasing the pay of the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program and providing year-round training, employment, and job placement opportunities, we can better support youth and young adults by providing constructive income-generating opportunities.
- ***Promote Individual, Parental, and Government Accountability:*** Collaborating with diverse government entities, we aim to promote a framework that fosters individual, parental, and governmental accountability. Through this initiative, we will create a structured ecosystem that offers resources and assistance to parents grappling with children engaged in or at risk of violence.

Transportation

What do you see as the biggest transportation needs facing Ward 7 residents? As Ward 7 Councilmember, what specific measures and/or initiatives would you champion to improve the transportation infrastructure in Ward 7.

Anyone who has driven their car or walked the sidewalks in Ward 7 knows we need to improve transportation infrastructure in Ward 7. Making sure we have calm streets for all modes of transportation is important, yet community input is paramount when redesigning roads and changing traffic and parking conditions.

As your next Ward 7 councilmember I commit to:

- *Work with D.C. government agencies in the Operations and Infrastructure Cluster to **conduct infrastructure needs assessments across Ward 7 neighborhoods.***
- *Work with the D.C. Department of Transportation to **reduce the number of traffic fatalities across the Ward by strengthening traffic calming measures** throughout every neighborhood in Ward 7.*

- Introduce legislation that pushes **long-standing transportation infrastructure projects** across Ward 7.
- Introduce **legislation that requires the D.C. Department of Transportation to gain community input** throughout the planning and implementation of infrastructure development projects.
- Work to **increase green infrastructure and advocate for the development of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods** throughout all Ward 7 communities.

Health & Human Services

What are the biggest health and human services challenges that you see facing Ward 7 residents? As Ward 7 Councilmember, what specific measures and/or initiatives would you champion to improve health outcomes of Ward 7 residents?

Homelessness and food insecurity are the biggest health and human services issues facing Ward 7. With a 12% increase in homelessness in 2023, affordability is not the sole cause. **We lack adequate shelter to house the unhoused.** The District has 49 full-service grocery stores, yet only 2 stores are located in Ward 7. **Residents are living in a food desert with access to and options for healthy and nutritious alternatives.**

As your next Ward 7 councilmember I commit to:

- Introduce legislation to **increase the funding to support more food access programs** and push to have community gardens in every middle and elementary school across Ward 7 where community members and families have access.
- Work with D.C. Public and Charter Schools to **offer classes that teach students and parents living in underserved communities how to grow healthy foods.**
- **Fight to build a new full-service hospital and other healthcare facilities** across Ward 7 to support community living with healthcare challenges.
- Work with the D.C. Poverty Commission to **address the deeply rooted causes of poverty in Ward 7** and work with key District agencies to develop a comprehensive plan where we can **transform poverty into prosperity.**