

Ward 7 DEMS Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Kelvin E Brown

Current Neighborhood: Hillcrest, WDC

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Questions:

1. Ward 7 deserves a new champion! Crime continues to devastate our communities; our education system continues to receive less funding year after year; many of our schools are on the verge of being closed or failing; our healthcare infrastructure isn't equipped to serve our seniors or provide the necessary care for our residents; and housing continues to be a cost burden for working class families.

Residents that I speak to are looking for change across Ward 7. Everyday I'm out in the community talking to neighbors, either at their doorsteps or dining room tables. I hear the same sentiments: Words are not enough, and neighbors are looking to our city leaders to step up and provide meaningful solutions that will solve our most pressing issues. They are looking for experienced leaders. And so I've decided to run for the Ward 7 Council member seat. I believe Ward 7 deserves a council member who will put our communities first by ensuring our neighbors' thoughts and opinions are centered in the decision-making process.

2. Relationships are key to problem solving and are certainly beneficial in moving Ward 7 and the District of Columbia forward. Throughout my professional and public career I've centered my problem solving around ensuring all stakeholders are included within the decision making process, opinions are valued, and when decisions are made they are done in a collaborative manner that builds trust and confidence.

Establishing a working and amicable relationship with the Executive Office of the Mayor, DC Council colleagues, ANCs and the public is KEY! Without these relationships and professional respect, we cannot move forward efficiently or effectively. As a servant leader, I know my first order of business is to listen to my constituents. And that includes

residents that support/don't support my candidacy, other candidates and the like because everyone has value and each opinion matters.

My first activity as Council member would be to bring back together all of the candidates that ran for the Ward 7 council member seat and have a leadership discussion that is centered around identifying, prioritizing and developing processes to address our most pressing issues. No idea or opinion will be left unheard!

Education

Our collective education system in Ward 7 continues to fail our students, whether it's lack of adequate funding, high truancy rates, low teacher retention, or safety. Our students, teachers, faculty and staff deserve world class facilities and the autonomy to do what they do best – teach our students and support our families!

As the Ward 7 Councilmember, on day one, I would pull together all involved thought leaders, parents, staff, and other involved community members for a problem solving meeting to align around the educational priorities for Ward 7. In this conversation, I will center the discussion around data and actionable solution development.

Specifically, I would do the following:

1. Convene a listening tour and solution development meeting. I would first meet with education and non-education sector leaders to develop a meaningful partnership and understanding around their role and how they can participate in education. This includes leaders from healthcare organizations, faith based institutions, public safety professionals, etc.
2. Introducing via legislation a “Lifetime Learner” tax credit to help families defray educational expenses that are obtained in the District of Columbia by certified local businesses entities.
3. Expand funding for additional slots for after school, pre-k programming and infants, toddlers.
4. Advocate for and introduce legislation to preserve existing funding levels plus inflation for DC Child Subsidy programs.
5. Introduce legislation to support early childcare workers and other educational professionals.

These actions would strengthen our education system in Ward 7. As of right now, money is being thrown at the problem without first doing a level of diligence to really understand the root problem and the identification of the expected outcomes. I propose a data-driven, thoughtful and holistic approach to solving our educational issues.

While it is true that we have to focus on “alternative” education paths such as vocational skills, STEAM, etc. I think we must take the right approach rather than doing what we’ve always done, which is expecting funding to solve the systemic/cultural nature of why our students aren’t receiving/obtaining the best education in the world.

Housing

I sincerely believe that safe, affordable housing is a fundamental human right. As an experienced housing leader with over 11 years of direct housing strategy development, construction, and execution experience, I would lean heavily into addressing housing as a near crisis issue by focusing on the three barriers to housing for Ward 7 residents: 1) lack of supply of affordable housing, 2) insufficient access to funds for downpayment, closing cost and other maintenance related expenses, and 3) low credit/credit invisibility.

As council member, I would support legislation that will prioritize the needs of our residents above the interest of foreign investors or other profit seekers by:

- Strengthening TOPA laws to support tenants rights
- Introducing legislation to exempt seniors 65+ years of age and disabled veterans from paying property taxes in the District of Columbia
- Introducing legislation that supports cooperative, fair landlords and holding those that violate tenant rights fully accountable.
- Introducing legislation to establish a new DC median income standard that would be used for accessing housing costs and affordability levels.
- Introducing legislation to establish a funded DC Community Land Trust Program and/or Co-op program.
- Establishing a Housing Innovation Officer role within DCHD that would be focused on incubating innovation solutions that will aid in the development of new ideas to support housing goals across the District of Columbia
- Studying and partnering to establish new processes and procedures for the administration of the HPAP.

Public Safety

I believe our communities deserve to be safe and free of crime.

As councilmember, I would support legislation that aims at keeping seniors, our students and the broader community safe by:

- Restoring school resource officers to help increase the overall safety of our students.
- Funding proven after-school programming that engages students and meets them at their greatest needs and interests.

- Supporting MPD recruitment goals and working with city partners to better train, equip and retain our most impactful officers.
- Introducing legislation to invest in a “community hub” model that centers support and family resources in the local community, e.g. at schools, recreation centers, etc.
- Partnering with the Executive to provide additional support to reestablishing a dedicated, working and fully accredited crime lab in partnership with the local colleges.
- Increasing funding to support the “whole family” by providing wrap-around services, additional access to healthcare/mental health services, educational opportunities and job training/readiness.
- Increasing funding for community beautification and infrastructure improvements.

Transportation

We must look at transportation from an equitable lens - connecting residents to work, school, and life experiences. It’s about their livelihood. My number one transportation priority would be working to build a transportation strategy and support infrastructure across Ward 7 that provides safe, reliable and equitable multi-modal transportation options for our residents.

Specifically, as Councilmember I would champion the following initiatives that will move Ward 7 into the future:

- Champion additional investments to ensure Ward 7 residents have dedicated bus routes
- Advocate for additional funding to increase usability of public bus shelters throughout the ward
- Champion investments in a feasibility study to determine the impact of building a new metro station at Minnesota Ave. SE and Pennsylvania Ave. SE
- Support the expansion of the DC Circulator and other rapid transit options across Ward 7
- Champion the utilization of safe roadway infrastructure to help protect sensitive and vulnerable areas throughout Ward 7

Health and Human Services

Healthcare and human services EOTR, specifically in Ward 7, continues to fail our most vulnerable residents. The lack of access to safe, affordable and equitable healthcare has escaped our residents for years. It’s time that we start thinking about healthcare as a human right and lack of healthcare as a crisis! All health indicators for Ward 7 are currently trending in the wrong direction and lack of a true community based healthcare model presents additional risk exposure for every resident.

As Councilmember, I would champion healthcare by approaching it from a holistic and whole person vantage point centered around building and maintaining healthy communities by:

- Increasing investments in early childhood/childcare programs that foster an environment of learning, safety, good nutrition and wellness.
- Increase and implement legislation and oversight to ensure DC's housing stock is healthy, safe and affordable.
- Support and advocate for funding to support child/family poverty programming. No child in Ward 7 nor DC should go hungry and without sustenance.
- Support a decentralized wrap around and case management services at local community centers, schools and faith based institutions throughout Ward 7. This would increase overall access, destigmatize receiving services, etc

Solving our healthcare and human services issue is a big challenge and one that requires innovation, partnership and adequate funding to tackle. However, as Councilmember, I would work directly with all involved stakeholders to ensure all thoughts and opinions are included, valued and a part of any/all decisions.