



At Large Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 2022 Ward 7 Democrats Candidate Forum for candidates in the Democratic Primary for the **At-Large Councilmember**. 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 Friday, February 18, 2022. **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: Lisa Gore

Candidate website: <https://www.gorefordc.com/>

Candidate Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gorefordc>

Candidate IG: <https://www.instagram.com/gorefordc/>

Candidate Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GoreforDC/>

Other social media: None

General Questions

1. What makes you the right selection for the Democratic nomination for At-Large Councilmember

I am a DC Public School mom, retired public servant with 28 years of service, and a believer in community-powered change centered on justice that puts people first. For too long, we've seen policy choices that fail to meet the needs of working families and vulnerable residents, and instead promote special interests. Given that the DC Housing Authority is being investigated by the inspector general, I am the right candidate for this moment in time. I have been recognized nationally for my work on investigating some of the most challenging federal housing issues. I have played instrumental roles in

combating FHA mortgage fraud during our nation's mortgage fraud crisis. As a federal special agent, I led efforts to hold violators accountable for the most egregious crimes and financial frauds that harmed DC residents and victims throughout the United States. As a mom, I know first-hand the challenges DC families face trying to raise kids in a safe, healthy environment. I've served as a senior manager accountable for the operations of 44 investigative field offices; cross-component staff; national policy implementation; and a budget of over \$1.3M, thus I know government operations. I'm also the only candidate with actual experience overseeing government program delivery, including identification of systemic program weaknesses. I know how to hold agencies responsible for performance. I am a candidate that puts the people first, and I have the experience and the plan to put words into action.

2. As an At-Large Councilmember, what steps would you take to ensure that you are able to meet the needs of the residents of Ward 7?

It's time for change in Ward 7, where the results of continuing to do "business as usual" have yielded further harm. In particular, change has not been fast enough for people who don't earn a living wage, and struggle to make ends meet or for kids enrolled in public schools that aren't addressing their needs. Change has come too late in this city for families displaced from their homes, public housing residents living in unsafe housing conditions, pedestrians demanding safe streets, and communities suffering from the health effects of environmentally disastrous policies. Systemic change in Ward 7 starts with listening to the communities and elevating their opinions so that they are given the same weight as special interests are in this city. By supporting communities, I will fight to create housing policies that build equity through tools such as community land trusts, prevent the displacement of residents, invest in public housing repairs, and stabilize rents and protect tenants. My plan for systemic change does not end at housing, but expands to economic justice, environmental justice, public transportation, and serving the needs of our older community members.

3. How can Councilmembers better connect with communities that have lost faith in the ability of the government to solve problems?

The communities have lost faith in the ability of the government to solve problems because they have lost trust in our elected officials. Trust can only be gained through accountability and justice. I have spent over 23 years of my career holding powerful people accountable for their injustices to communities. I will start with restoring trust by holding institutions like the DCHA accountable for any corruption that might have happened, and then providing justice to communities by a plan that gives them back the power and resources that have been taken from them. Of all the people on the council and every candidate in the at-large race, I am the only candidate with this experience.

4. How would you describe an effective relationship of the Council Chair and other At-Large members with Ward 7?

An effective relationship with Ward 7 should be guided by transparency and honesty. While the Council Chair and At-Large members are elected by the entire city, their decisions need to be guided by helping the people who need help the most. Ward 7 has

faced a host of injustices that need to be corrected, all the way from education, to housing, to economic justice. The Council Chair and At-Large members serve in a unique position to view the city as a whole, and thus make decisions that prioritize the citizens of DC who need help the most, and not by trying to divide resources in every ward, including those that are already over-resourced.

Education

1. Do you believe the per pupil formula is adequate? If so, why? If not, how would you modify the per pupil formula to ensure that all schools are sufficiently funded and facilitate equitable outcomes in communities in Ward 7 and Ward 8?

The per pupil formula and its outcomes are a perfect example of why we need to tackle systemic issues. We need to develop new educational financing models that close the school funding gap between our communities and end a system that too often leaves schools in Wards 7 and 8 with shrinking budgets and trying to save basic positions like librarians. Instead of a financing plan that is driven by statistics that ignore systemic injustices, we need financing models that center on creating an environmentally healthy school environment. Our teachers and children deserve academic environments that prioritize environmental justice and are conducive to teaching and learning. In addition to ensuring all schools have the minimum necessities required for functioning, public schools in Wards 7 and 8 should install energy-efficient windows, electric heat pumps, and renewable energy rooftops to reduce energy consumption and transition to net-zero energy consumption. We should also prioritize green retrofitting and school modernization projects that first target the most at-risk schools. Funding mechanisms that are driven by needs of the students rather than empty statistics are necessary. This includes mechanisms driven to reduce student-to-staff ratios in schools and expanding the availability of services like school psychologists, nurses, and counselors. It also includes fighting for transportation policies that make our children's passage to and from schools and throughout our communities safe. I will support transportation policies built on economic, racial, and climate justice, including zero-emission school bus fleets, pedestrian safe infrastructure, and safe cycling infrastructure. Every student deserves to be able to navigate their way to school and throughout community spaces safely.

2. What legislative tools would you advance to improve the ability of the Council to recruit and retain quality teachers?

I will use all legislative tools that cannot only increase teacher pay, but also make their jobs fulfilling and rewarding without undue stress and harm. As I said above, our students and teachers need environments where they thrive. By reducing student-to-staff ratios in schools and expanding the availability of services like school psychologists, nurses, and counselors, the school environment not only becomes conducive to learning, but also good for the teachers as well. In particular, we need to address the needs and concerns of families and teachers in navigating the challenges of COVID-19. We must listen to and learn from the experiences of our students, families, and teachers to strengthen policy choices that provide the safest alternatives for long-term recovery. Finally, I will work with the teacher's union to understand what they need to succeed as well.

3. How could the Council exercise more effective oversight over DCPS?
First, we need to reestablish the Council's Education Committee. Our children's education deserves focused attention that only a dedicated oversight committee can provide. Second, we need to advance a governance structure for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education independent of Mayoral control. We must have independent and accountable oversight of our schools.
4. How could the Council exercise more effective oversight over the Public Charter School ecosystem?
Public Charter Schools must be more transparent, and I would strongly support requiring that more than one board position be allocated to parents, as well as, following in the example of the State Board of Education, requiring the Board to have student representatives. We need board members who reflect the communities served by the charter sector. This composition empowers the community and thus, will provide the Council with insight to issues from multiple perspectives.
5. Are there any intervention programs you believe should be enhanced or expanded? Are there any that should be curtailed or terminated?
We need to maximize all school-based interventions that we possibly can. Specifically:
 - My plan calls for a New Deal in Public Schools which is modeled from the Green New Deal. As stated in other responses, I support a re-investment in vocational education programs that are specifically geared to skilled trades and the creation of business opportunities for our kids. This would include green service industries trades like solar technicians.
 - I support improvements in service delivery and transparency to special needs students. Public school statistics repeatedly demonstrate not only is this group behind their peers, but also parents have limited insight into the transparency of their service delivery and outcomes.
 - I support increased funding for Out of School Time opportunities that further stimulate educational interests and provide safe space for our kids when they're not in school. This helps working families economically, emotionally, and socially.
 - Mental health support for our kids of another area that we must address with additional resources. Our kids have been dealing with the impacts and navigating the challenges of COVID-19 for almost three years. In addition to COVID, our kids live and play in communities that are seeing increase traffic and physical violence. These issues are difficult to navigate as an adult and are great stressors for young people. Increased mental health support is a critical need if we want to nurture healthy kids.
 - As mentioned before, I support investing in a New Deal for public schools that centers on creating an environmentally healthy school environment. Our teachers and children deserve academic environments that prioritize environmental justice and are conducive to teaching and learning. A New Deal in public schools will install energy-efficient

windows, electric heat pumps, and renewable energy rooftops to reduce energy consumption and transition to net-zero energy consumption. A New Deal in public schools will also prioritize green retrofitting and school modernization projects that first target the most at-risk schools.

- And to reiterate, I support reducing student-to-staff ratios in schools and expanding the availability of services like school psychologists, nurses, and counselors that take a whole-child approach to meeting student needs.

Economic Development and Housing

1. Ward 7 hosts a disproportionately high percentage of vacant and dilapidated buildings and vacant lots. How would you address this issue without inadvertently depriving middle income families of a rare asset?

It's important to recognize that underutilized blighted properties play an important role in realizing our affordable housing goals. Additionally, my experience in enforcing federal housing laws affords me with first-hand knowledge of the role blighted properties can play in crime. However, I firmly believe in preserving the rights, legacy, and economic viability of the Black community. Historical racial issues have contributed to the state property conditions in the Black community, including higher mortgage interest rates, under-valuing property values, community, and economic disinvestment. As a city, we must do all we can to correct this legacy. Specifically, I support:

- Implementing home-owner repair programs that have minimal to 0% interest rates. This would provide financial support for property repairs.
 - Strengthening DHCD's Single Family Residential Repair Program by increasing eligible repairs, grant amounts, and making eligibility requirements less restrictive.
 - Providing homeowners with legal support to ensure any encumbrances on properties are properly removed. For example, Black families often have "heir" properties and thus title issues. This should also include property liens.
 - Reducing property tax burdens and rates.
 - Home-ownership counseling. This educational component is critical to long-term sustainability and educating Black homeowners about predatory lending practices and scams.
 - My platform calls for the creation of an anti-displacement action plan. This would include conditions that lead to the loss of family land and property.
2. The DC Housing Authority and its Board faced significant challenges in 2021. What changes, if any, are needed to sustain and increase affordable and public housing in DC? Are there any decisions on the allocation of affordable units that deserve closer scrutiny?

As a former Special Agent in Charge of the investigating agency, I know this arena well. Investigations like the one in process of the former Board Director are a direct result of the lack of agency controls, accountability, ethics, and transparency. Professionally, I have worked first-hand with small, mid-sized, and large public housing agencies, housing

organizations, and the mortgage industry on developing internal procedures to combat fraud, waste, and abuse. I'm the only candidate with this unique, nationally recognized expertise, and would be able to create an oversight plan, in conjunction with recommendations already offered by the Office of the DC Auditor and the DC OIG, to ensure sound internal operating procedures at DCHA.

I have a systemic plan that engages all the tools in the toolbox to provide housing for people who need it the most. This includes, integrating community land trusts and social housing models that center permanent affordability, avoid resident displacement, and build assets for residents and their families. I will also work to fund public housing repairs, so units are rehabilitated and maintained to prevent future deterioration. Public housing residents deserve to live in homes that are safe, healthy, and thriving. I will also preserve affordable housing units by strengthening rent control, closing loopholes, and strengthening tenant protections. The Far Northeast and Southeast planning area (overlapping with Ward 7), contains 19% of the affordable housing distribution, the second most of all planning areas in DC. In contrast, Rock Creek West contains only 1% (overlapping with Ward 3). We need to balance these numbers and create drastic numbers of truly affordable housing in planning areas that have the least percentage and number of affordable housing units.

Increasing the amount, location, and affordability of housing units is an overarching goal for DC. My focus on deeply affordable housing (levels 30% and below MFI) is outlined below and includes an overview of needed oversight of DC housing agencies (DHCD, DCHA, and the HPTF). As a Councilmember, I will support growth and development that will not harm and displace communities of color. I specifically support:

- Preserving affordable housing units by strengthening rent control, closing loopholes, and strengthening tenant protections;
- Investing in placed-based strategies to ensure affordable housing of all types, including family-sized units, is distributed equitably throughout DC;
- Implementing strategies that will examine the development of publicly owned land and the use of publicly owned properties to create targeted affordable housing;
- Creating Anti-Displacement legislation that identifies recommended programmatic and policy improvements to help hold DC accountable for existing equitable development and anti-displacement efforts; and
- Using zoning and fair housing programs to expand housing types and affordability to facilitate people from all income levels to live in affluent areas.

Deeply Affordable Housing

My platform specifically targets this category of affordable housing because people at this income level (roughly 30% AMI) are the most underserved, and statistically, DC has not produced significant levels of housing at this level. My strategy includes:

- Increased oversight of the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF), which is DC's main source of funding for deeply affordable housing. Unfortunately, improper oversight of the agency has resulted in the misapplication of \$82M in funds that were intended to produce deeply affordable units. In fact, this agency has never met its statutory obligation to produce its targeted number of units. I would hold hearings on the agency inefficiencies cited in both the DC Office of Inspector General, and Office of the DC Auditor's reports;
- Funding public housing repairs: subsidized housing is our largest source of deeply affordable units. I would advocate for funding public housing repairs to ensure these units are rehabilitated and maintained, and closer monitoring of DCHA's participation in the Rental Demonstration Program which attempts to leverage private-sector funds to address capital improvement backlogs; and
- Integrate community land trusts and social housing models that center permanent affordability.

Housing Agency Oversight

As a former federal special agent responsible for investigating and providing oversight of federal housing programs, I'm uniquely skilled in understanding the complexities of managing housing programs from an oversight perspective. It is important to note, that regardless of the amount of funding an agency receives, without proper oversight and program management, there is a great risk that programs will fail to produce its intended results and, in some cases, pose significant health risks to the public. This is currently demonstrated by the pending HUD review of DCHA, the scathing report from the DC OIG on misuse of nearly \$82M in HPTF funds dedicated to deeply affordable housing, DHCD's forced return of \$15M in federal HOME funds; DCHA's continued failure to correct lead-based paint; and other systemic issues.

As the only candidate and potential future Councilmember with career expertise in oversight of housing programs, which includes Public Housing Authorities, multi-family management agencies, community development agencies, and numerous single-family programs, my focus would be to ensure our housing agencies have the capacity to perform its functions efficiently and systemic issues raised in performance and budget oversight processes are clearly addressed. Specifically, I would:

- Hold hearings that include both public and government witnesses on systemic issues and ensure the hearing process gets to the bottom of the issues and corrective action is taken;
- Use the full power of the Committee, including subpoena power, as needed; and
- Recommend committee staff that have both programmatic and financial analytical skills to assist committee members in understanding the complexity of housing operations and performance data.

Public Safety

1. The District of Columbia is experiencing a general decline in crime, but a spike in murder. 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?
I believe the root causes of crime are the failure to invest in people and communities. Throughout my responses I point to all the major factors I believe are the root causes of violence, as well as suggestions for legislative resolution in the areas of:
 - Economic justice.
 - Decent, safe, and affordable housing.
 - Education that centers on taking care of our kids needs and providing them opportunities to learn, develop, and graduate with options for both college and careers.
 - Mental health support and services.

2. What would you recommend that the Committee on Public Safety and Justice do to improve oversight over MPD?
First, I believe the oversight of MPD is not sufficient. As an ANC Commissioner I have called on MPD to account for the disparate policing numbers in 2nd District. I also authored and passed a [resolution](#) calling for greater oversight in MPD's use of technical surveillance equipment. As an oversight professional and former law enforcement officer, we cannot leave oversight of MPD to its own devices. This agency, based on its mission and role in public safety, must answer to greater oversight and accountability.

Specifically, I would follow the recommendations of the Police reform Commission. The Commission has laid out an excellent roadmap of how to improve the accountability and oversight of MPD. We need councilmembers who are unafraid to get this done.

3. What legislative tools would you create or modify to reduce recidivism and reintegrate Returning Citizens into our communities?
I would like to answer this question first from the perspective of preventing involvement in the justice system. I worked with youth in the criminal justice system for many years. If we wait until our kids enter the justice system before we holistically meet their needs, we have already failed. I believe in working with families early on. The District's Birth to Three program is a great program that if implemented correctly, will give our kids a great head start on their education, which is a critical step in reducing involvement with the justice system. My platform also calls for the re-investment in vocational education programs for our middle and high school youth. This is an important step in the overall economic growth in the community and will play an important role in providing our kids with options. I support dedicated vocational centers that specifically focus on skilled trades, employment incentives, and business development opportunities. Although DC Public Schools offer the Career and Technical Education program, I believe we can strengthen this program to offer more skilled trade programs, green jobs programs, and guaranteed employment post-graduation.

In terms of recidivism and Returning Citizens, I believe the most important factors are jobs and housing. However, we must first ensure conditions are improved in DC jail and people are treated with dignity.

There have been recent reports of deplorable conditions that are nothing more than dehumanizing. This is not acceptable. The Office of the DC Auditor first reported on these conditions in 2019. However, they received notoriety after the January 6th insurrection. Another report commissioned on behalf of the DC Auditor found a lack of continuity in substance abuse treatment at DC jail. Finally, a lawsuit was brought alleging students with disabilities in DC jail did not have classes for over a year. Recently, a Federal Judge ordered DC to provide these services. All these issues are disgraceful examples of how we treat our incarcerated populations. This must be corrected first as it greatly reduces the trust and faith incarcerated individuals will have in government's role in their well-being. I also believe we must reduce barriers for this population including:

- Coordinating services upon returning to the community;
- Ensuring Returning Citizens have access to job and employment training opportunities; and
- Providing affordable housing opportunities.

Jobs and Employment

1. What legislative tools would you create or modify to increase the percentage of District employees that reside in the District of Columbia?

We need legislative tools that target the root causes of income and wealth inequality through homeownership, quality education, transportation access, environmental justice, and fair wages. We must intentionally re-focus policies that have enabled racial and economic inequities to persist, which keep people out of DC. This includes introducing policies that promote more significant home-ownership opportunities for lower-income residents. Owning a home is a crucial opportunity to build generational wealth, especially for employees who work in DC but do not live here. I will also Fight for all DC workers to earn a living wage and have adequate paid family and medical leave to provide for themselves and their families. This includes excluded workers like our street vendors, domestic workers, and construction workers, who are an essential part of our city's economy but are often denied these same principles of economic justice and workers' rights. Finally, the District has numerous home-ownership programs for first-time home-buyers and DC employees. I would focus on providing oversight of those programs to ensure they are meeting their intended goals.

2. The unemployment rate in Ward 7 is 14%. What legislative tools would you create or modify to improve the ability of the District to restore these residents to the workforce?

We cannot leave our workers behind, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19, which affects worker rights, safety, and health. Workers deserve leaders who are willing to fight to make economic systems accessible to everyone by breaking down barriers such as the lack of affordable childcare, housing, and transportation, which make "making it" almost impossible for workers and families. I will also tackle wage theft that undermines the economic security of DC workers, especially low-income and immigrant communities and service sector workers. We must protect vulnerable workers who lack the legal and financial resources to defend themselves against employer abuse. I will also support

Initiative 82, the District of Columbia Tip Credit Elimination Act of 2021, which would end the tip credit by 2027 by gradually raising the mandatory base wage to match the city's minimum wage. I will support economic development in Ward 7 that invests in businesses and provides Ward 7 residents with job opportunities, like the recent development projects in Skyland Town Center.

Finally, my platform calls for the re-investment in vocational education programs for our middle and high school youth. This is an important step in the overall economic growth in the community. I support dedicated vocational centers that specifically focus on skilled trades, employment incentives, and business development opportunities. Although DC Public Schools offers the Career and Technical Education program, I believe we can strengthen this program to offer more skilled trade programs, green jobs programs, and guaranteed employment post-graduation.