



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: Eboni-Rose Thompson

Current Neighborhood: Fort DuPont

Candidate website: www.ebonirosefor7.com

Candidate Twitter: @eboni_roset

Candidate IG: @eboni_roset

Candidate Facebook: Eboni-Rose Thompson for Ward 7 Councilmember

Other social media: none

General Questions

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

Answer: As a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Ward 7 Councilmember, I offer a unique blend of experience, proven results and a steadfast commitment to serving our community.

Firstly, my tenure as the second-highest elected representative for Ward 7 has provided me with invaluable experience in policymaking decisions that impact our district's youth and families. Serving as the Ward 7 School Board representative and president has allowed me to champion equitable education initiatives and earn the trust of over 13,000 Ward 7 citizens. This trust underscores my ability to make responsible decisions as a legislator and policymaker.

Secondly, my track record of tangible accomplishments speaks volumes. I've played a pivotal role in the successful modernization of three Ward 7 schools (Ron Brown, Kimball Elementary, and Randle Highlands) and led community-driven economic development projects as the Vice-Chair of the Fletcher Johnson task force where I helped to spearhead the charge toward the

first-ever Ward-wide organizing effort in which every ANC chair and civic association signed and agreed upon the community vision to drive the development project to where it is today. Additionally, my involvement in organizing Ward-wide initiatives, such as the Ward 7 COVID Response Network, demonstrates my dedication to addressing community needs during times of crisis.

Throughout my tenure, I've prioritized collaboration with Ward 7 ANC members, civic associations and community leaders to achieve common goals. As your next Ward 7 Councilmember, I am committed to continuing this collaborative approach to drive positive change and deliver results for our community.

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?

Answer: Over the past 15 years, my active engagement in the Wilson Building has allowed me to establish strong relationships with both the legislative and executive branches. Through direct advocacy and testifying on crucial issues affecting Ward 7, I have cultivated existing ties with many Council members, and I am committed to sustaining and expanding these connections.

In my current role as the Ward 7 School Board representative, I've demonstrated collaboration by organizing the first-ever State Board of Education Council Breakfast. This event facilitated meaningful discussions leading to legislation for the implementation of financial literacy standards in the District's educational curriculum, showcasing a successful OSSE and Council collaboration. My ongoing partnership with Councilmember Gray's office on budget and oversight matters further emphasizes my dedication to fostering effective working relationships.

As a Ward 7 Councilmember, I am eager to extend my collaborative approach by reaching out to unsuccessful Ward 7 candidates. I envision leveraging their valuable knowledge and expertise to form a policy or advisory board thus creating a platform for sharing ideas and contributing to the improvement of Ward 7. Every candidate has a unique role to play post-primary and I am committed to ensuring a cooperative effort that benefits our community's quality of life. I believe I am the right person to facilitate this collaborative endeavor.

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?

Answer: Building on my accomplishments as the current Ward 7 School Board Representative, I am dedicated to tackling the educational challenges our community faces. During my tenure, I successfully secured funding for the full modernization of three Ward 7 schools and played a crucial role in getting partial funding for the modernization of Beers ES. I will persist in pushing

for the expedited modernization of Burrville ES, Drew ES, JC Nalle ES, Plummer ES and Neval Thomas ES.

My advocacy extends to ensuring adequate funding for existing schools and programs, including the restoration of budget cuts affecting staff and the preservation of vital programs like Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) to enhance long-term student outcomes.

Recognizing the crucial role of health services in student safety, I will continue advocating for full-time school nurses in every DC Public and Charter School, emphasizing the significance of comprehensive support for our students.

In summary, my dedication to education in Ward 7 involves building on my current role as the Ward 7 School Board representative and State Board president. I will continue securing resources, addressing COVID-related learning loss and implementing innovative programs to guarantee equitable access to high-quality education and support services for all children in Ward 7 neighborhoods.

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?

Answer: As your Ward 7 Councilmember, I am committed to advancing economic development through strategic measures. Building upon the existing East End Economic legislation introduced by Councilmember Gray, my focus is on attracting more full-service grocery stores and essential neighborhood amenities to Ward 7. Notable successes including the LIDL grocery store, partial completion of the Skyland shopping center, and two new sit-down restaurants, will serve as a foundation for further progress under my leadership.

To catalyze economic growth, I will prioritize the completion of Skyland Town Center and advocate for the comprehensive development and completion of East Capitol Gateway. Additional funding for the Fletcher Johnson site will be crucial to addressing environmental concerns and ensuring the realization of affordable housing, urgent care facilities and other amenities outlined in our Ward 7 Community Vision for Fletcher Johnson. Moreover, I will extend my focus to other pivotal projects such as the RFK Stadium and Reservation 13 redevelopment to align development efforts with the needs and aspirations of Ward 7 residents.

In essence, I aim to redefine Ward 7's "value proposition" by transforming it into a destination that residents, workers, and visitors alike find appealing. By advocating for strategic developments, I seek to enhance economic opportunities, improve housing options and elevate the overall quality of life for Ward 7 residents.

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?

Answer: As your next Ward 7 Councilmember, I am dedicated to improving homeownership opportunities and addressing the challenges faced by residents seeking affordable housing. In response to the recent depletion of HPAP funds, I propose specific measures to enhance access to homeownership:

Equitable HPAP Distribution: I will advocate for a portion of HPAP funds to be allocated on a "first come first serve" basis specifically for low to moderate-income first-time homebuyers. This approach ensures a fair and timely distribution of resources, prioritizing those in immediate need.

DHCD's Supplemental Budget Support for Assistance with Homeownership: I will work towards continuing to expand funds to support the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) supplemental budget. This includes the administration of funds to strengthen community development organizations that offer housing counseling services and programs. These initiatives aim to assist residents in Ward 7 on their journey to becoming homeowners.

Senior Housing and Aging in Place: Recognizing the importance of supporting seniors in their desire to age in place, I will actively back programs like the "Safe-At-Home" initiative led by Councilmember Anita Bonds. Additionally, I will focus on appropriate budget allocations and oversight to ensure the well-being of seniors residing in Ward 7's senior homes, along with safeguarding public housing stock.

Small Area Plan for Neighborhoods: Continuing to invest in a focus on small area plans for neighborhoods like Marshall Heights and Benning Ridge is crucial. These plans will enhance neighborhood amenities, improve the overall quality of life, and support the diverse residents throughout communities in Ward 7. The goal is to create a strategic framework that addresses the unique needs and aspirations of specific neighborhood areas.

Provide Tax Incentives for CDCs: To maximize housing opportunities, I will propose continued tax incentives for Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to transform vacant properties into workforce or affordable housing. This proactive approach aligns with our commitment to providing diverse housing options in Ward 7.

By championing these initiatives, I aim to create a comprehensive approach to housing in Ward 7, ensuring that residents have access to affordable homeownership as first-time homebuyers, seniors can age in place comfortably, and neighborhoods thrive with enhanced amenities and support structures.

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?

Answer: The recent surge in crime across Ward 7 and the city demands a multifaceted response targeting its root causes and age-appropriate responses. Factors such as concentrated poverty, limited access to resources, education disparities, and untreated mental health issues contribute significantly to this rise in crime. To effectively address this issue, legislative tools and interventions are crucial. As Ward 7 Councilwoman, I would use the following legislative tools and best practices:

Budgetary Oversight and Resource Allocation: Rigorous oversight of the budget is necessary to ensure efficient resource allocation, allowing for flexibility in reallocating funds as needed. Mandating collaboration among District agencies dealing with youth, families, and public safety is imperative. Regular meetings should be held to develop unified strategies for intervention and prevention.

Replication of Successful Crime Prevention Program Models: We can learn from successful initiatives like the Citywide Coordinating Council on Youth Violence Prevention, pioneered by the late Councilmember Jim Graham. By replicating such models, we can enhance violence interruption and prevention efforts. Coordinated action involving District government agencies, community-based organizations, and outreach workers has historically proven effective in reducing crime rates.

Increased Investment in Community-Based Violence Prevention Programs, Cadet Program Recruitment, and Affordable Housing Opportunities for Officers: Amplifying investment in community-based violence prevention programs, particularly in high-crime areas, continues to prove to be essential. Expanding funding for violence interruption programs and ensuring dedicated leadership for agencies responsible for implementing these programs such as the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP), prioritizing the recruitment of DC residents for the police cadet program while bolstering programs and services at DPR Centers located in high-crime areas is crucial. Furthermore, implementing legislation that provides affordable housing and tax credits for police officers can incentivize them to both work and reside in the communities they serve.

Establishment of Mental Health Trauma Centers: Addressing mental health trauma is paramount in breaking the cycle of violence. Establishing mental health trauma centers in high-crime areas, such as Minnesota Avenue, can provide crucial support to residents suffering from untreated mental health issues and trauma, thereby contributing to a reduction in overall violent crime rates.

Increase Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs: Continuing to invest in programs to prevent involvement with the criminal justice system and supporting returning citizens is also vital. Strengthening community-based service provider and police training, expanding housing-first models, and increasing mental and behavioral health services are essential steps to address the root causes of crime and lower the spike in crime rates, particularly in Ward 7.

In conclusion, a balanced approach that emphasizes community engagement, mental health support, and preventive measures is necessary to comprehensively address the root causes of crime and ensure the safety and well-being of Ward 7 residents.

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.

Answer: As your next Ward 7 Councilmember, I recognize the pressing transportation needs of our residents and will advocate for a multi-modal approach to address them effectively. One key focus is restoring budget cuts to WMATA to expand transportation routes and ensure timely commutes.

Other specific measures and initiatives I will continue to champion include:

Pennsylvania/Minnesota Avenue, SE Intersection Improvement Project: I will continue supporting and advocating for the completion of this crucial project to enhance safety and connectivity in the area.

Corridor Studies for Central Avenue and Benning Road: Continued support for ongoing corridor studies is essential for improving transportation infrastructure. These studies contribute to informed decision-making for enhancing safety and accessibility.

Traffic Calming Solutions: Collaborating with advocacy groups and residents, I will continue to prioritize the implementation of traffic calming solutions in hazardous intersections and corridors, particularly in areas with high transportation fatalities in Ward 7. This approach aims to enhance safety for all road users.

Beautification Efforts: Initiatives such as planting flowers in medians and completing sidewalk safety installations along major corridors like Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and other corridors in Ward 7 will continue to contribute not only to aesthetics but also to overall safety for pedestrians and motorists.

East Capitol Street and Pennsylvania Avenue Corridor Studies: I am committed to continued support for the completion of these important Ward 7 corridor studies. Securing federal funding for the East Capitol Street redesign in collaboration with Councilmember Charles Allen, is a notable step toward improving local streets and corridors in Ward 7 that I am proud of.

Revitalizing Project 295: I will advocate for the revival of Project 295, a long-overdue initiative that requires federal support to bring it to fruition. Securing federal funds for our local streets and corridors is essential for comprehensive transportation improvements in Ward 7.

Bus Shelter Renovations: I will continue to address bus shelter renovations like the bus shelter at the intersection of 38th Street, SE, and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, which is a continued priority to enhance transit experiences and community safety for Ward 7 residents.

These measures collectively aim to create a more efficient, safe, and aesthetically pleasing transportation infrastructure for the benefit of all Ward 7 residents.

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?

Answer: Recognizing the prominent health and human services challenges in Ward 7, my role as the next Councilmember will prioritize the following measures:

Increasing Access to Healthy Food Programs: A heightened focus on expanding access to healthy food programs will continue, emphasizing the funding and establishment of additional full-service grocery stores in Ward 7. Measures such as the aim to ensure Ward 7 residents have convenient access to fresh and nutritious produce as well as programs that support the consumption of healthy food as a means to optimal health and well-being.

Continue to Expand a Comprehensive Healthcare Provider Network Located in Ward 7: I will continue to advocate for the creation of a robust network of high-quality healthcare providers to be located within the Ward. This strategic approach seeks to improve overall community health by facilitating easier access to essential healthcare services in conjunction with the new stand-alone Urgent Care Center that will be located at Fletcher Johnson as a part of our “community vision”.

Build Upon Reforms to the DC Healthcare Alliance: Ensuring accessible healthcare services for all residents remains a priority. Ongoing reforms to the DC Healthcare Alliance will be supported to eliminate barriers and enhance the overall quality of healthcare services.

Provide Additional Resources for Behavioral Health Support Services: Addressing mental health needs is paramount. I will advocate for additional resources dedicated to behavioral health services to provide comprehensive support and address the evident mental health challenges observed in downtown Ward 7, particularly on Minnesota Ave.

These initiatives collectively aim to enhance health and human service outcomes, tackle systemic challenges, and contribute to the overall well-being of Ward 7 residents. Through sustained efforts, we can create healthier and more resilient communities throughout the Ward.