

Charles Allen

Page 1: Contact information

Q1

Contact information

Name	Charles Allen
Email	Charles@CharlesAllen2022.com
Website	www.CharlesAllen2022.com
Social media accounts	@charlesallen

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

Between 36,000 and 50,000

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

Q5**Yes**

Housing production in D.C. has been uneven and particularly concentrated in certain neighborhoods. 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?

Q6**Yes**

On the forty-three percent of all surface area that is owned by the federal government in the District, it is illegal to build an apartment; according to a D.C. Policy Center report, "single-family units make up only 30 percent of the District's housing stock, but occupy 80 percent of its residential buildings." Should apartments be legal on 100 percent of all surface area governed by the District?

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

Q8

Where in Ward 6 do you think new housing should be built? If you do not think new housing should be built in Ward 6, please write, "I do not think new housing should be built in Ward 6."

Ward 6 has been adding new housing more than any other ward in the District - so much so that the 2020 redistricting led to the largest single ward shift of population in the District's history. This has mostly been a function of higher density development near Metro stations and transit connections. Those locations are very appropriate for new housing growth and I expect and support that continuing. The focus I want to bring as a part of that growth is to ensure affordable and workforce housing, and family style housing, is a part of those new construction plans so that the very thing that makes many of these spaces attractive - transit, parks, amenities, etc. - are accessible to all residents.

Q9

Where in Ward 6 do you think density should be increased to accommodate the construction of new housing? If you do not think density should be increased in Ward 6, please write, "I do not think density should be increased in Ward 6."

Ward 6 has more Metrorail stations than almost any other ward in the District. These sites - creating great access to transit options - are the locations where higher density should continue to be a priority.

Q10	Removing or raising the Height Act within 1/4 mile of Metro stations
Given the opportunity, how would you amend the District's Height Act?	

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.	

Q12	Means-tested or income-restricted,
I consider affordable housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):	Subsidized,
	Rent-controlled,
	Costing no more than 30 percent of one's household income

Q13	Not means-tested or income-restricted,
I consider market-rate housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):	Unsubsidized,
	Not rent-controlled,
	Costing more than 30 percent of one's household income

Q14

What is, and is not, within the scope of a councilmember'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 any given councilmember can do to produce more affordable housing in the District.

As Councilmember, one should focus not just on increased public funding and policies that promote the ability to produce more affordable housing, but they should actively use their voice and position to influence the outcome of a project to deliver more affordable housing. On the Council, I've helped take a project from 30% affordable to 100% affordable by using community partnerships to build a shared vision, and the power of my seat to change the expectations and possibilities of a project. And similarly, when some in a community fought against affordable housing like permanent supportive housing, I stood up to push back on misguided fear-mongering and shepherded an important project through the community and Council process. As elected leaders, we must fight with more than just budget and legislative action, but also bring the power of our seats and our voice to deliver an outcome our city needs.

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 a councilmember, answer calls to "fix" public housing?

This is a question that could deserve pages and pages of a response. In short though, the Council must do more than send dollars to DCHA to repair public housing. Council must exercise political will to create greater value for dignified and safe public housing, and it must use stronger oversight in DCHA decisions and operations to make sure residents see the change that's needed.

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)?

?? This is a question that could deserve pages and pages of a response. In short though, the Council must do more than send dollars to DCHA to repair public housing. Council must exercise political will to create greater value for dignified and safe public housing, and it must use stronger oversight in DCHA decisions and operations to make sure residents see the change that's needed.

30-50 percent MFI (\$27,100-\$45,150 per year for a household of one)?

?? This is a question that could deserve pages and pages of a response. In short though, the Council must do more than send dollars to DCHA to repair public housing. Council must exercise political will to create greater value for dignified and safe public housing, and it must use stronger oversight in DCHA decisions and operations to make sure residents see the change that's needed.

50-80 percent MFI (\$45,150 to \$72,250 per year for a household of one)?

?? This is a question that could deserve pages and pages of a response. In short though, the Council must do more than send dollars to DCHA to repair public housing. Council must exercise political will to create greater value for dignified and safe public housing, and it must use stronger oversight in DCHA decisions and operations to make sure residents see the change that's needed.

80-120 percent MFI (\$72,250 to \$108,350 per year for a household of one)?

?? This is a question that could deserve pages and pages of a response. In short though, the Council must do more than send dollars to DCHA to repair public housing. Council must exercise political will to create greater value for dignified and safe public housing, and it must use stronger oversight in DCHA decisions and operations to make sure residents see the change that's needed.

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?

Stronger oversight from the Council. Executive-level focused and urgent coordination.

Q18

As a councilmember, 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)?

Like other affordable housing, the District must use the tools it possesses - direct funding, leveraging within public land disposition, policy making, and more - to help deliver housing at this income level. In addition, as Councilmember, I would continue prioritizing that commitments are secured through zoning for the inclusion of the needed deeply affordable housing units, and also additional housing reserved within affordable, workforce income band levels like this.

Q19

As a councilmember, 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)?

Like other affordable housing, the District must use the tools it possesses - direct funding, leveraging within public land disposition, policy making, and more - to help deliver housing at this income level. In addition, as Councilmember, I would continue prioritizing that commitments are secured through zoning for the inclusion of the needed deeply affordable housing units, and also additional housing reserved within affordable, workforce income band levels like this.

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 25-unit project each in both Bellevue and Forest Hills, for residents making between 80 (\$72,250) and 120 percent (\$108,350) MFI

,

I prefer this scenario because::

As you noted, these scenarios are imperfect and not inclusive of all options available. They are also being made with a significant lack of information and context. I do not like choosing any of these options. For example, I do not see deep affordability included in any of them and there is no information about unit size. Are these studios or 3-bedrooms? All of this could be critical information to weigh in deciding a preference. But for the purpose of illustrating decision-making, I chose the scenario I did of the four presented because it was the maximum number of overall units and it was split between two communities, rather than concentrating within just one. However, I have to note the affordability levels in this scenario are not low enough and it is unclear what size unit is being contemplated or compared to within these scenarios.

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 the planning areas you would primarily represent, Capitol Hill, Central Washington, and Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest, meets the stated targets by 2050?

Continue supporting new construction and density - especially in areas around Metro and transit.

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:

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

,

Implement stronger oversight of all landlord petitions filed with the Department of Housing and Community Development

Q23

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 restrict this.,

Please explain your selected response.:

I have not studied this issue closely enough to determine if this is a "suitable evolution" of TOPA and what changes should be considered or made.

Q24

No

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

Q25

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

I have supported the idea of Community Land Trusts and have been in partnership with several leaders of Southwest Ward 6 to explore and promote possibilities of a planned redevelopment of a public site using a CLT model. I will continue to look for other opportunities.

Q26

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 would need to study this issue of whether the District's offers are consistently achieving their goals before committing to what, if any, changes might be needed.

Q27

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?

I don't believe IZ is creating enough affordable units and we are also seeing several sites where large scale residential buildings are being constructed but no IZ was required within zoning. Those are missed opportunities to create new affordable housing and needs to be reexamined.

Q28

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?

Q29

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?

Q30

Creating opportunities for new housing

In a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan, which of these three options would be your top priority?

Q31

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?

Q32

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?

Q33

Where in Ward 6 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 in Ward 6 please write, "I do not think PDR zoning should be added in Ward 6."

I have recommended in the past that the city creatively look at sites that could work for this use. I would be open to exploring such sites in Ward 6.

Q34

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 a councilmember, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for dedicated bus lanes, which make bus service faster and more reliable?

Q35

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?

Q36

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 a councilmember, support removing single-occupancy vehicle parking and travel lanes for protected bike lanes?

Q37

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?

Q38

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 a councilmember, support road pricing as a means to reduce congestion to speed up transit, improve air quality, and raise revenue?

Q39

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."

I do not have a specific proposal in mind at this time, but I know I would want a significant portion of that revenue to be reinvested back into public transit and transit equity improvements.

Q40

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?

Q41

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 a councilmember, to assist in closing WMATA's operational funding gap?

I will use my seat and voice to advocate for more regional operational payments - including from the federal government - to stabilize WMATA operational finances. I will also look to creative ideas like my Metro for DC proposal that would create a strong transit benefit for DC riders, but would also attract riders back to Metro (and new riders) in a way that would give WMATA a chance to earn more operational financing on a large scale.

Q42

The Metro for D.C. proposal 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," but has faced some pushback based on the way that it would be funded, via quarterly adjustments of projected revenue. What do you view as the path forward to ensuring Metro for D.C. is passed and implemented?

Call a vote. The votes are there to pass this bill today.

Q43

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?

Q44

Pick a major street in Ward 6 that does not currently have a pending transportation project. Describe what you envision for it, and explain how you would, as a councilmember, work with the District Department of Transportation to implement that vision.

There a lot to choose from, but I'll speak to 6th Street as an example. Whether it's at 6th and A Street NE where the lack of a full-way stop intersection creates hazards, or 6th and G Street NE where near collisions with children walk to and from school are a regular occurrence, or 6th and H Street NE where high pedestrian volumes are not prioritized but thru-put of vehicles is, or 6th and Florida Ave NE where regular collisions and injuries occur and travel is dangerous for anyone on foot or bike -- this is a long and important North-South corridor that needs urgent attention. I wold like to work with my ANCs and DDOT to reimagine how the street could be redesigned for people first and result in safer roadways and intersections.

Q45

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

Q46

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 beyond 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

Q47

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 that you can commit to taking on foot, by bus, by train, or by bike instead.

We currently walk our kids to and from school and take Metro downtown when not teleworking from home or in the community. But I sometimes drive our household's car downtown to work when I need to make multiple trips for various meetings in a single day. I will continue to examine whether I can reduce those trips or transfer my mode.