

Gordon-Andrew Fletcher

Page 1: Contact information

Q1

Contact information

Name	Gordon-Andrew Lee Fletcher
Email	Gordon@gordonforward5.com
Website	https://gordonforward5.com
Social media accounts	@Gordonforward5 https://www.facebook.com/GordonForWard5DC

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 50,000 and 100,000

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

Q8

Where in Ward 5 do you think new housing should be built? If you do not think new housing should be built in Ward 5, please write, "I do not think new housing should be built in Ward 5."

I support increases in both market-rate and affordable housing in Ward 5. There are vacant and underutilized parcels scattered throughout the Ward, and I fully support incentives for mixed use and transit accessible housing, where feasible. Vacant and underutilized parcels offer an opportunity to provide new housing to those in need relatively quickly, while additional housing is being built. Of course, all of this is subject to zoning and density variances, identifying and assessing sites, and negotiating with the property owners.

Q9

Where in Ward 5 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 5, please write, "I do not think density should be increased in Ward 5."

Ward 5 has a substantial inventory of single-family homes. Many are under-occupied by either "empty nesters," childless couples, or singles. Allowing – and providing incentives – for the production of additional legal units on these lots would provide at least two tangible benefits. First, additional units for extended family, or renters and second, potential income that can help offset homeownership costs for those on fixed incomes, allowing more District residents to age in place.

I support increased density within a one mile radius of Metro stations. It is also important to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) on parcels beyond the one mile radius. Ward 5 housing is diverse. The suburban character of Ward 5 and quick access to downtown DC, is a major attraction to new residents and homeowners. Adding ADUs on single family parcels will increase density, while preserving the character of Ward 5's neighborhoods.

Q10

Given the opportunity, how would you amend the District's Height Act?

Removing or raising the Height Act within 1/4 mile of Metro stations

,

Raising the Height Act only for buildings that will produce more affordable housing than required by inclusionary zoning

Q11

No

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

I consider affordable housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

Means-tested or income-restricted,

Subsidized,

Rent-controlled,

Costing no more than 30 percent of one's household income

Q13

I consider market-rate housing to be (check all that, in your opinion, apply):

Not means-tested or income-restricted,

Unsubsidized,

Not rent-controlled

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.

The Council has several means at its disposal to promote the production of affordable housing. Such as:

1. Ensuring that inclusionary zoning laws apply throughout the District of Columbia. Since the passing of inclusionary zoning laws, our Comprehensive Plans have allowed wide swaths of the city to be exempt from the inclusion of affordable housing in new developments. Major development zones such as NoMa are not required to include income-restricted units, while market-rate rents exclude low to moderate income renters and condominium buyers.
2. We have no real rent-control or rent-stabilization laws. Rent control applies to increasingly aging buildings and units, while new developments can raise rents at will, often pricing out long-term renters.
3. Developments approved for the construction of subsidized, or income-restricted, housing should not be allowed to jettison lower-income units after approval and receipt of government incentives.
4. Identifying abandoned and vacant homes and providing purchase assistance to bring these properties back into circulation as affordable housing.

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?

As Councilmember I would seek to reorganize DCHAs's debt to make it more manageable to pay down. However, first and foremost DCHA needs to run like a professional organization. We need to assess DCHA to make sure efficiencies are in place, and they have tools necessary to fulfill their goals and objectives.

DCHA staff and leadership must be evaluated to determine if they are technically proficient and capable of handling the agency's wide range of responsibilities, with a particular emphasis on eliminating contracting irregularities.

Lastly, the District of Columbia must appeal to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development for a reevaluation of its per unit maintenance funding, which has steadily eroded over the last 25 years.

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)?

Based on the goal of building between 50,000-100,000 units of housing by 2045, this category should make up approximately 39%, or 19,500 and 39,000 units.

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

Based on the goal of building between 50,000-100,000 units of housing by 2045, this category should make up approximately 38%, or 19,000 and 38,000 units.

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

Based on the goal of building between 50,000-100,000 units of housing by 2045, this category should make up approximately 12%, or 6,000 and 12,000 units.

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

Based on the goal of building between 50,000-100,000 units of housing by 2045, this category should make up approximately 11%, or 5,500 and 11,000 units

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?

We must require developments to include more units for those earning under 30% of the area AMI. Many developments will only be built within the 50, 60 and 80% range, effectively failing to increase the number of units for our lowest income residents.

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)?

The biggest obstacle to affordable housing production is the uneven number of units that are being produced across income bands, with a bias towards higher earners and rents, instead of focusing on need. Lower income households are more highly rent burdened, and suffer the highest amount of housing instability.

I would require all new developments to include housing affordable across all income levels. If government subsidies are involved, the affordable unit percentage requirements should be strictly adhered to, based on population need, rather than developer requests.

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)?

I would require all new developments to include housing affordable to those across all income levels. In addition, workforce housing should be strongly incentivized through the Housing Production Trust Fund.

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 30-unit project in Forest Hills for residents making between 60 (\$54,200) and 80 (\$72,250) percent MFI, and one 20-unit market-rate project in Bellevue

,
I prefer this scenario because::

I prefer this scenario because: Forest Hills has little to no affordable housing. Bellevue housing stock is statistically less expensive (and often less desirable), and the area could use newer and more modern units to retain residents who could afford to move out of the neighborhood, but wish to remain closer to family and friends.

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 area you would primarily represent, Upper Northeast, meets the stated targets by 2050?

I would propose all new developments be required to include affordable units (for rent and/or sale). In addition, accessory dwelling units need to be actively promoted and incentivized (e.g., construction/conversion subsidies and/or streamlined permitting processes).

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:

Make buildings built prior to 2005 subject to rent stabilization

,

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

,

Clarify what types of landlord upgrades qualify for capital improvements petitions

,

Cap annual rent increases at the level of inflation, or consumer price index, and eliminate the extra two percent allowed under current law

,

Eliminate vacancy increases

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.:

All tenants should be offered an opportunity to purchase individual units at regulatory purchase prices. This would allow tenants to stay as purchasers if they are able, or leave with funds that ensure former tenants can comfortably relocate. The requirement that the entire building needs to vote to purchase (which is often impractical) usually nullifies the spirit and intent of TOPA.

Q24

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?

Yes

Q25

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

Community development organizations need to be able to assist tenants with forming co-ops. In addition, they can utilize community land trusts to become owners of their residences. This can be accomplished by offering homeownership education, down payment assistance and/or financial assistance and property tax modification.

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 keep DOPA in its current form, although the city needs to exercise this option far more often. We also need to provide significantly more support to help guide tenants in forming co-op structures, assigning shares, and managing their building effectively.

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?

Safe, affordable housing should be the right of every District resident. Inclusionary zoning policy should be developed with that in mind. That said, we need to address work-arounds and loopholes that allow some developers to get around the minimum requirements.

Policy thresholds must be reevaluated annually to take into consideration population shifts, economic down turns and factors that may skew Median Family Income (MFI) figures.

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 elsewhere in the District, besides Ward 5, should PDR zoning be added? If you do not think PDR zoning should be added elsewhere in the District, please write, "I do not think PDR zoning should be added in the District."

Looking at the density of the District and the new hybrid and work-from-home work schedules adopted in the face of COVID, I do not think PDR zoning should be added in the District as we are not a city reliant on manufacturing. In addition, the cost of real estate makes PDR zoning financially impractical in the District.

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

No

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 support road pricing. However a compromise can be achieved by limiting the number of out of state drivers, who pay no local taxes, but use our roads and parking.

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?

Since affordable, reliable public transportation is such a vital part of the economic infrastructure of the District of Columbia, and acknowledging that it has become increasingly necessary as we address issues such as climate change, I believe that steady and adequate funding is necessary.

This can be accomplished in several different ways. A percentage of parking fees, fines and taxes should be dedicated specifically to support and enhance public transportation options.

Q42

Yes

Do you support Councilmember Charles Allen's Metro for D.C. proposal, which 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"?

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 5 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.

Michigan Avenue comes to mind. Specifically creating a roundabout as a traffic calming measure (although the entire area should be assessed to determine needs and upgrades).I would also increase funding for crossing guards during school drop off and pick up.

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

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 one block in any direction of their residence (about a two- to four-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.

There are several that come to mind: my weekly trip to church; date night with my wife and my visits to OneLife Fitness are all trips that can be taken by foot, bus, train or bike.