

Zachary Parker

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Q1

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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?

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Q4

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

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 think new housing should primarily be built around existing high-density areas and close to Metro stations. I would focus my push for new housing development around Union Market, Old Soldier's Home, the Washington Hospital Complex, and around the Rhode Island Ave and Brookland Metros. With every new development, I would push for mandated traffic studies.

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."

I think density should be increased around Catholic University, along the Metro Branch Trail, and in the aforementioned areas from the previous question.

Q10

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

Removing or raising the Height Act only in downtown,

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

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.

Yes

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,

Built by private developers

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 a great deal of authority to produce more affordable housing. This includes adopting or modifying legislation on rent control, requiring affordable housing in public land development, setting rules for housing programs (such as permanent affordability and setting affordable housing income targets), subsidizing creation of affordable ADUs, supporting homeownership, and more. It also includes providing adequate funding for housing tools such as LRSP, the Housing Production Trust Fund, public and social housing, and community land trusts. It can include providing funding and improving rules to help tenants purchase their buildings. The Council also sets the Comprehensive Plan and through that can create a framework for increasing the supply and zoning of 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?

The District has an obligation to residents living in public housing to ensure that residents live in clean and healthy conditions. Unfortunately, the federal government has capped the amount of public housing, as well as defunded public housing operations and modernization for decades. The housing authority has been lately marked by corruption and poor leadership of the agency. This means that public housing can be preserved only through efforts by the District. I support using local DC funds to rehabilitate and make our public housing sustainable. Along with funding, the District must enhance its role in holding accountable DCHA, especially over DC-funded rehabilitations. I am open to options for how to pursue that. For example, the District could make demands of DCHA in return for local funding, or it could enter into formal partnership over redevelopment projects in ways that give the mayor and Council direct oversight of those projects. If possible, I am open to putting DCHA under direct control of the Mayor and Council, at least for DC-funded projects.

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)?	20,000
30-50 percent MFI (\$27,100-\$45,150 per year for a household of one)?	30,000
50-80 percent MFI (\$45,150 to \$72,250 per year for a household of one)?	30,000
80-120 percent MFI (\$72,250 to \$108,350 per year for a household of one)?	20,000

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?

I believe this answer from DCHD is an abdication of their responsibility. It is true that creating housing affordable to households below 30% MFI requires involvement of multiple agencies. DHCD programs, primarily construction and renovation subsidies, are often not enough to build housing affordable under 30% MFI, and meeting that target often requires rental aid through LRSP or other support.

But the income targeting rules in HPTF are statutory, which means the mayor has a duty to meet them and the Council has a duty to hold the mayor accountable. As a Councilmember, I would use my oversight authority to develop a blueprint for meeting the housing needs of DC's lowest income families, including clarifying the mix of resources and programs (like HPTF, CLTs, and LRSP) needed. That can create a standard to hold the mayor accountable to, making it clear if the mayor falls short of meeting the targeting requirements. I also would use my oversight and budget authority to fill in the gaps if the mayor falls short.

This is incredibly urgent. If we support the continued development of housing, without ensuring that a substantial share serves households with low-incomes, we will set a future where only wealthy newcomers can stay in the city, while lower-income residents continue to get displaced.

For clarity, I answered the previous question 16 based on what is feasible with where the District is today, not strictly what "should" be built to meet our needs.

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)?

Research from the Urban Institute and Coalition for Smarter Growth suggest that there is not an enormous shortage of affordable housing options for households in this income range and that housing subsidies should focus on households below 50% MFI. This suggests that policies that support growth of DC's housing stock, along with robust rent control, should meet much of the need for housing for households between 50% and 80% of AMI, including units targeted on this group through Inclusionary Zoning (for homeownership). Many development projects subsidized by the District include some units for households at this income level, presumably because they are easier to finance than lower cost units. While I do not support this practice, I expect that this will continue to meet the housing need for this group. Finally, I support a robust HPAP program to provide first-time homeownership opportunities to households with incomes below 80% of MFI.

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)?

Ensuring that the District is moving forward to develop more housing, across all income levels, should go a long way to meeting the needs of people in this income range. That said, it is likely that households in this income range who are renters may face challenges seeking to become homeowners. I support broadening the HPAP program to support more first-time home buyers.

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

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I prefer this scenario because::

This project provides a substantial number of units, with most of them located in a low-poverty area. If the units in Forest Hills are aimed at first-time homeowners, they would meet an important need. It is likely that market rate units in Bellevue would still be affordable to households between 50% and 80% MFI. Finally, residents of Ward 7 and 8 note that a concentration on affordable housing there for the very lowest income families fails to create opportunities for people to stay as they move up the economic ladder.

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?

It is incredibly important that the District develop more affordable housing, in pace with development of market-rate housing, and that the affordable housing is spread throughout the District. This will require vigilance and commitment, and it will require using all the tools the Council has. I would work to ensure that the District is meeting its commitment to develop enough affordable housing city-wide. This would be primarily by advocating for adequate funding, but also through other tools such as eliminating loopholes in rent control, legislation to push affordable housing developments to be permanently affordable, and ensuring public land dispositions maximize the opportunity to develop affordable housing.

The second issue is ensuring that affordable housing is developed in Ward 5, as part of efforts to ensure equitable distribution of affordable housing. That may require altering the scoring rules for approval of projects under the Housing Production Trust Fund to take into account higher cost of land in some parts of the District. I also would negotiate with the mayor and developers (for profit and nonprofit) to push them to develop affordable housing in Ward 5, through seeking public land dispositions or HPTF funding. If that is inadequate, as it may be, I would consider more restrictive rules, such as requiring private developments to include affordable housing as a share of their developments (tied with funding from the District to make them affordable).

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 four-unit buildings subject to rent stabilization,

Make buildings built prior to 2005 subject to rent stabilization

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Peg eligibility for rent stabilization to a dynamic date, so that new buildings are subject to rent stabilization after 15 years

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Allow only one increase per year, with notice, for any D.C. rental housing that's exempt from rent stabilization

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Eliminate voluntary agreements that take rents to market-rate

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

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Clarify what types of landlord upgrades qualify for capital improvements petitions

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Narrow the scope of hardship petitions; stagger allowable increases; and make increases temporary, rather than permanent

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Make rent increases under substantial rehabilitation petitions temporary rather than permanent

,

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 formalize this.,

Please explain your selected response.:

I deeply respect and want to protect the rights that TOPA provides. I generally prefer that tenants do not choose buyouts, which provide temporary cash but often weaken long-term protections and the true definition of equity (ownership). I would prefer that tenants use TOPA rights to purchase, or at least select an owner who will make commitments around property upgrades and long-term affordability. Better yet would be to incentivize and simplify collective purchase, so that we can expand equitable ownership opportunities and stable housing prices in the city. I think we should formalize and tweak the process so that buyouts could still happen, but the District could support the formations of more permanently affordable housing models such as limited-equity co-ops. We could also ensure that tenant associations in all buildings facing a sale get legal and financial support to understand and exercise their TOPA rights. That said, we must not limit tenant power, and must respect and maintain the ability of individual tenants to choose a buyout if that is what they want.

Q24

Yes

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?

As noted above, I would ensure that the District funds technical, legal, and financial assistance to ensure that all tenant associations receive support around TOPA when their building goes up for sale. As a Councilmember, I also would push to provide adequate funding, through an HPTF set aside or other means, to ensure help to tenants who wish to buy their building but lack financial resources, with long-term affordability requirements that in most cases would lead to creation of an LEC. I also would support funding to provide ongoing technical assistance to LECs, to support proper management and maintenance of their buildings.

For Community Land Trusts, I would make it a standard part of the DC budget, just as HPTF is now. CLTs will grow to scale only with public funding, and I would write legislation to prioritize permanently affordable units like CLTs when we make deals with developers. I also would amend DC law to allow homeowners to split their property into two pieces for the purpose of donating one piece to a CLT. This may not yield a large number of CLT units, but it would support creation of some CLT units throughout the city, especially in high-opportunity communities.

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?

Given that the District has not used DOPA widely, my first goal would be to actually utilize this tool, which would not only create affordable housing but also give us valuable insights into making this process work well. Over time, I would support amending DOPA to allow the District to negotiate building purchases, when it would further the city's affordable housing needs, rather than waiting for a building to be put up for sale. I also am not sure on the reason for formal limitations on types of buildings the District is allowed to purchase and would be open to reducing or eliminating these restrictions.

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?

The District's IZ program should be harnessing private development to support development of affordable housing throughout the District without the use of public dollars. It is one tool to create affordable housing, but because it relies only on added density as a subsidy, its role is limited in meeting our affordable housing goals.

As a Councilmember, I would support ongoing accountability metrics and analysis to ensure that IZ is maximizing requirements that the added value of density is used for affordable housing, rather than higher developer profits. That can only be confirmed through regular and comprehensive analyses of DC's real estate market and the IZ rules.

IZ currently requires developers to set aside a portion of a development's square footage as affordable, with no requirements related to unit size or other factors related to affordable housing need. I support amending IZ to require developers to build a diversity of unit sizes, such as units with 2 or more bedrooms, to ensure that IZ addresses the needs of families.

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."

I'm not going to condemn a specific community to the pains that Ward 5 communities like Brentwood and Fort Totten have experienced. That said, I think it is important that other communities take on their fair share of the burden. I acknowledge that rezoning PDR land is a challenge, but it is something the Council should pursue.

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 largely would re-invest these resources into climate-friendly public transit, such as expanding public transit options and reliability, reducing fares (starting with reducing or subsidizing fares for residents with low-to-moderate incomes), subsidizing WMATA (assuming regional partners also do so), and encouraging WMATA to speed up its purchase of electric buses.

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?

We must work to support a strong WMATA, with an equity focus to ensure that low-income residents who are public-transit reliant have access to frequent, reliable, and affordable public transit. The pandemic has punished public transit finances everywhere, and it is not clear whether the pandemic recovery will resolve those problems. As a Councilmember, I would be a strong advocate for regional cooperation to support WMATA operations, but would also be open to new revenue streams from high-wealth individuals (especially targeted to families that own multiple cars) and equity-oriented DMV fees to find dedicated funding streams while lowering the burden for disabled and low-income folks who need their car.

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

Fare-free transit

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.

Rhode Island Ave is often treated as a dangerous highway running through the heart of Ward 5. In NW, trees run along the middle and there are safe ways to traverse the neighborhoods along the corridor quickly and by any means. In NE, it's a different story. And much of the parking along it is temporary, so it provides little opportunity for folks to comfortably park there. It is perfect for a reimagination.

My vision would be to expand the sidewalk, which has become dangerous for folks of all abilities to traverse, to create space for pedestrians to walk comfortably and safely. I'd like to incorporate a protected bike lane into those expanded sidewalks. I would also push for a dedicated bus lane, perhaps one that switches direction for the different times of day with rush hour (although I understand that this is an imperfect solution). The particulate and diesel pollution is especially bad, so I would look to find ways of reducing industrial use of the road and planting and designing streetscapes with key vegetation that would decrease flooding and lessen the effects of pollution. Finally, I would push for a road diet and equity-focused speed cameras to stop cars from reckless driving.

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	6
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	2
Implementing road diets on arterial streets	
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	4
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	5
Regional reciprocity for automated traffic enforcement	8
Building more housing and affordable housing in the District proximate to transit and job centers	3
	1

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.

I gave up my car in 2019, although admittedly I've returned to regularly using a car because of campaigning. I've learned that most of what I used to do by car, I can do locally or by using public transportation. One challenge is going to the grocery store where I often want to buy in bulk. To cut down on travel, I now buy in small amounts and take advantage of stores I can easily walk to. I recognize that that is a privilege not all Ward 5 neighbors have.
