

Phil Thomas

Page 1: Contact information

Q1

Contact information

Name	Phil Thomas
Email	philforward3@gmail.com
Website	philforward3.com
Social media accounts	Twitter: @PhilForWard3DC Facebook: @PhilForWard3 Instagram: @Philforward3

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

Q8

Where in Ward 3 do you think new housing should be built? If you do not think new housing should be built in Ward 3, please write, "I do not think new housing should be built in Ward 3."

New housing needs to be built in every neighborhood in Ward 3. We should not concentrate it into one neighborhood or solely by Metro stations or transit corridors. Every neighborhood should do their fair share to increase affordable housing across the ward.

Q9

Where in Ward 3 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 3, please write, "I do not think density should be increased in Ward 3."

New density should increase where already density exists. There are already dense areas across the main thoroughfares in Ward 3 and we should look at increasing transportation around those areas. I am also a proponent of ADUs, and I think they are a key policy lever to increase density without changing the character and feel of many of the neighborhoods in Ward 3.

Q10

I would not amend the Height Act.

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

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,

Built by the government,

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,
Expensive,
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 I would make sure 100 million or more is in the housing production trust fund and that money gets out the door quicker with better oversight. I want to make sure the money spent produces true affordable units and that more housing is available quicker. I would work with the Executive Office to invest more in privately owned buildings to increase more deep affordable units and engage the community on investing in building accessory dwelling units.

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?

DCHA serves many of the District's most vulnerable residents, and providing these residents with safe, decent, and dignified housing must be one of the City's top priorities. Although DCHA is independent, five of the 11-member Board of Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and must be approved by the Council. As Councilmember I will ensure board members that come before the Council for approval have significant experience in real estate, housing, and portfolio management. Given DCHA's extensive maintenance and repair backlog, I will focus budget priorities on making all of DCHA's units habitable and safe. Understanding that our most vulnerable residents have additional service need, as Councilmember I will support DCHA partnering with other District agencies such as DOH, DBH, DCPS, and DPR to provide wrap around services to individuals and families. I would also cut through the bureaucracy to make certification easier and by making DCHA update the individual throughout the process. There needs to be a portal where an individual can check their status throughout the process and a real time chat function if they have any questions.

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)?	40,000
30-50 percent MFI (\$27,100-\$45,150 per year for a household of one)?	45,000
50-80 percent MFI (\$45,150 to \$72,250 per year for a household of one)?	25,000
80-120 percent MFI (\$72,250 to \$108,350 per year for a household of one)?	15,000

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?

It really comes down to working with the government agencies and the residents to find realistic locations west of rock creek park to put deep affordable housing. I want to continue to invest in the Housing Production Trust Fund ensuring that the trust fund meets its statutory requirements including by passing the HPTF transparency amendment act which better allocates funding for deep affordable units. The consolidated request for proposal has additional funding sources in it and requires that at least 5% of units have permanent supportive housing. HPTF is not the best way to achieve under 30% AMI housing. Low income housing tax credit and the local rental supplement program.

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)?

YES - The District should produce housing for all income levels and housing that includes two-to-three bedrooms.

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)?

YES - The District should produce housing for all income levels and housing that includes two-to-three bedrooms.

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::
When tradeoffs need to happen you have to take a city wide approach and see where the need is as well as the greatest impact. With all the scenarios producing the same amount of units the greatest need for workforce housing is Forest Hills and more market rate housing in Bellevue which already has more lower income housing then Ward 3.

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, Rock Creek West, meets the stated targets by 2050?

As a bridge builder I would continue to work with the community, the DC government and the housing production trust fund to deliver more affordable units. With the first deep affordable units coming to Ward 3 on Western Ave. NW I would continue to legislate and work with the community to find alternative locations west of Rock Creek Park to create more affordable units. With development coming in Tenleytown, Friendship Heights and Woodley Park I would work with the developer to bring more affordable units around Ward 3.

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:

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

,

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

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.:

TOPA rights need to be amended because even though the current tenant can benefit in the process by taking a buyout the next tenant loses out. The law needs to be formalized to fix the existing law in which the landlord ultimately benefits.

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 Councilmember I would support legislation that brings more affordable housing to Ward 3 and the District. I would also engage community members, stakeholders and residents so that they are knowledgeable about limited-equity co-ops, community land trusts and social housing.

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 make the District Opportunity to Purchase Act more relatively available but won't change the law. I think what is more important is using the Housing Production Trust Fund and getting money out of the door quicker to build more affordable units.

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 inclusionary zoning policy should create more affordable units in the District but also in Ward 3. I think we are achieving that goal but we need to do more as a city. It is failing by not producing true deep affordable housing and housing for our seniors. What I would do is make money more rapidly available, engage land owners and take care of our senior population.

Q28

Mostly tenant-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

Yes

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

No

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 3 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 3, please write, "I do not think PDR zoning should be added in Ward 3."

I do not think PDR zoning should be added in Ward 3.

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

No

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 would like a study done when traffic returns to normal to see what congestion looks like. Then I would revisit on how to invest that revenue.

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 support the Metro for D.C. Act which would give every resident \$100 to ride the metro each month and boost WMATA ridership and help the environment.

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 3 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.

My vision for MacArthur Blvd. would leverage the new high school and bring the Circulator there. With 500 out-of-boundaries children supposed to attend I would like to increase other means of transportation, remove day time parking on one side and add sharrows or a protected bike lane.

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	4
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	5
Implementing road diets on arterial streets	3
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	7
Making some streets, especially residential streets, car-free	6
Regional reciprocity for automated traffic enforcement	2
Building more housing and affordable housing in the District proximate to transit and job centers	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.

As an avid cyclist I love riding my bike from my home, passing Georgetown to the Wilson Building. Even though there aren't any protected bike lanes I like riding in the street to get to work. Another trip I like taking is catching the M4 on Arizona Ave. and MacArthur Blvd and taking it to Tenleytown where I can get on the metro. Both trips give me an alternative to driving my car everyday.