

Charles Allen -- Ward 6  
[www.CharlesAllenWard6.com](http://www.CharlesAllenWard6.com)

ECONOMY & JOBS

1. Given the strong economic and population growth in recent years, we can all agree that this city is now a hot place to live and work. Going forward, what criteria should justify the use of DC taxpayer funds for economic development?

I believe that public funds to spur economic development can be a valuable tool to help neighborhoods and residents leverage the most out of the public investment. Each decision should be made on the merits of the proposal – including, but not limited to, how an investment creates or preserves affordable housing and at what levels, how an investment creates new public spaces or amenities, how an investment strengthens neighborhood public transit connections, and how an investment creates local jobs and locally-owned businesses. Any public investment in economic development should be subject to a robust public discussion.

2. The tipped minimum wage has been frozen at \$2.77/hr in DC for over 20 years. Meanwhile, the Minimum Wage Act left out the issue of tipped minimum wages. Would you support an increase in the tipped minimum wage, and to what level?

Yes, I support an increase in the tipped minimum wage. I was the only Ward 6 candidate fighting for an increased minimum wage in the District, and its important to acknowledge that while that increase is an important win for our progressive movement, it did not include any increase in the tipped minimum wage rate. In the same way we built a regional coalition to successfully increase the minimum wage in the District and neighboring

jurisdictions, I would like to lead an effort to do so for tipped employees. In addition, I am very concerned about allegations of wage theft and the lack of a strong and accountable enforcement body in the District government. I believe these reforms should go hand-in-hand to have the greatest effect and benefit for workers.

## HOUSING

3. 60% of DC residents are renters. Do you propose to update and improve enforcement of rent control laws, which apply to an ever-decreasing share of DC's rental units? If so, how?

The District needs a strong rental market to ensure the city remains an affordable place to live. I will work to strengthen the city's rent control laws and keep these important rental units a part of the housing marketplace. They are critical to ensuring affordability in our city. I will also look to improve the city's TOPA program that helps long-time residents and renters continue to call their apartment home. In Ward 6, several neighborhoods are going through ownership changes of residential buildings and navigating the city's TOPA process can be difficult and daunting. I have successfully worked with several resident councils as their buildings went through these transitions and know where the process can be strengthened to protect residents.

4. How do you define affordable housing? What are your priorities short-term and longer-term, for remedying the affordable housing crisis in the District?

Affordable housing is a priority of my campaign and one reason compelling me to run for Council. Our city is creating affordable housing, but is not doing so in a way that helps all residents, in particular working families. Too often, the city's policies lead to the creation of affordable housing in the form of studios and one-bedroom units. That's important for a segment of our city's

population, but we are losing affordable housing for families. I will put a renewed focus on the creation and preservation of family-based affordable housing. To ensure we have an ongoing pipeline of housing creation, I will work to have dedicated funding for the Housing Production Trust Fund become a part of the city's annual budget commitment; not something that is at the whim of the housing market through the deed and recordation tax. To ensure the development of housing moves forward, the HPTF needs certainty and stable funding. In addition, I would like to work with housing advocates to revisit our Inclusionary Zoning policies – which are successful for a portion of affordability – but relies on a market-based approach that doesn't build the continuum of affordable housing our city needs.

## TAXATION

5. The Tax Revision Commission was presented with clear, official data showing that the District's current tax system is regressive. The Commission has recommended some proposals to reduce this regressivity. Are you comfortable with their proposals in this regard? What further changes would you propose, if any?

The Tax Revision Commission has put forward a comprehensive set of proposals and I commend the hard work, and negotiation, of that group. There are several elements included that continue to correct a regressive tax system – including one proposal I have been championing for the last several years, a change to the Standard Deduction to allow working families to keep more of their paycheck at home. In addition, the tiers recommended for individual income tax create a more progressive structure. However, I do not believe we need to reduce the tax rate for the highest income earners from 8.95% to 8.75%.

## ELECTION REFORM

6. In order to reduce the influence of large contributors on legislation, a number of states and localities have turned to public financing. Do you in general favor public financing, and if so, what model(s) do you recommend?

Yes, I strongly support public financing of campaigns, in particular the form found in New York City. But I also believe that the District shouldn't simply study proposals, but should move to implement and fund appropriately. I am concerned by one funding proposal that would take 1% of all District construction contracts to fund public financing of elections. A mechanism like that will only increase costs for development projects and as a city, we should place a high priority on creating a strong funding commitment within the District budget.

Until public financing is approved, I believe the District should prohibit corporate contributions. I not only support such legislation, but I am the only candidate in the Ward 6 Council race who has pledged to run a campaign without corporate contributions. I believe very strongly that if our elected leaders are to repair the public trust that has been broken over the last several years, then candidates and elected officials should hold themselves to a higher standard and ensure voters have 100% accountability and transparency for every dollar put into our elections.

## EDUCATION

7. The [percentage of children in traditional public schools](#) has declined dramatically in DC and is now, at 56%, the [third](#) lowest in the nation. Should we be concerned about this trend? If so, what should be done to halt or reverse it? If not, what changes would you propose to accommodate to the trend?

This trend is partly due to the result of diminished parent

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confidence in their education choices and achievement gap. However, in Ward 6, school enrollment is increasing and outcomes are improving. How we continue this growth in Ward 6, and city-wide, relies on the resolve and urgency I have made a key part of my campaign.

In recent months, the Council took action to provide additional funds to students at risk of academic failure. More often than not, these are the very students impacted by the significant achievement gaps witnessed in our city. In addition, the Mayor's office released an DC Education Adequacy Study that also spoke to the need to provide additional resources for at risk students and possible changes to the per-pupil-funding-formula. I believe that this type of investment in our school system is critical to meeting the gaps that exist.

However, funding alone is not the answer. I believe DCPS should provide greater principal and community autonomy. School communities knows best – often better than the central office – what their students, educators, and families need and how best to address those challenges.

Finally, DCPS currently does not create a unified vision for the pathway of a student – from pre-K, through elementary, into middle school, and culminating with high school. As a result, academic tracks start and end abruptly, and there is no unified vision through the feeder pattern to help a student succeed. This hurts our at-risk students in particular because there is a lack of academic continuity and stability provided.

These combined approaches will allow us to reverse the trend noted in the question and give parents greater confidence in the DCPS traditional system.

## OTHER

8. What is your opinion of the DC United soccer stadium land

## swap proposal?

I believe the proposal can be a great benefit to the city and to the Southwest neighborhood near the proposed site. In particular with the signed PLA for construction, it will create quality DC jobs and workforce training. I want to support the proposal, but I need to see several things occur:

- A commitment that the stadium will be built with team money, not District funds.
- An investment by the city in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the proposed site, in particular the James Creek and Syphax Gardens housing communities.
- An investment by the city in a park and public space similar to Yards Park built near the baseball stadium. Southwest needs its own Yards Park to create exciting green space on the Anacostia River.
- An investment by the city to convert the ocean of asphalt north of RFK stadium into the Capitol Riverside Youth Sports Park to provide much-needed athletic and green space. It would also correct a significant environment justice issue that has a devastating impact on the Anacostia River with every storm or snowfall.

## 9. Many neighborhoods in this ward are experiencing a rapid influx of new residents. How do you propose to preserve a sense of community and appropriate services for long-term residents?

This is an issue that plays out in Ward 6 in every corner; we are experiencing rapid growth in all communities and neighborhoods. A sense of community is one of the strong characters of Ward 6 and it's a significant reason people choose to move here. It is found in our civic associations, our ANCs, our schools, our small businesses, our neighborhood

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parks, and throughout the community. Ensuring services for all residents is a critical challenge. It is exactly why I made a priority of having a new Ward 6 Senior Wellness Center be constructed with programming to serve older residents. In addition, I have partnered with our Senior Villages to create and improve services to help residents age-in-place and stay in their communities. I will also bring my healthcare background to my service to the Ward by focusing on neighborhood-based care for all residents to help keep families and seniors in their community.