

DC for Democracy Questionnaire  
April 2014 Primary, Ward 6 (Democrat)  
Darrel Thompson

**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 local government plays a very important role in promoting and guiding economic development. I believe taxpayer funds should be used for economic development when projects initiate neighborhood revitalization, promote job creation, and support future sustainable economic development. It is critical that any project that uses District resources also include community benefits such as workforce and career job training.

**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 would support a tipped minimum wage at 70% of the minimum wage.

**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 Rent Control Amendment Reform Act of 2006 actually hurt tenants and has negatively impacted affordability for tenants. I believe in strong regulations that protect vulnerable renters from the ever increasing cost of living. While growth in home ownership is important, it is more important to maintain an affordable balance of rental housing so that those who cannot afford or do not want to own have affordable options. I would join with those on the D.C. Council in taking a fresh look at our rent control laws to make certain that booms in economic cycles do not drive out long-term residents and discourage short-term transitional residents from moving into the District. If we are to maintain a competitive rental stock within the region, rental price regulations must take into account certain disparities in income that favor some in surrounding counties.

**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?**

I define affordable housing as requiring every neighborhood to offer a wide range of housing options for the diverse populations that reside and work in the community. Affordable housing is considered to be no more than one-third of a person's income. That standard is becoming increasingly difficult to reach for too many District residents. One of the most important things we can do is increase the Housing Production Trust Fund. It has been underfunded far too long. I would partner with stakeholders to ensure we build affordable housing developments that can offer family units. I would also seek new initiatives such as a low-income housing tax credits that would provide equity for

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affordable housing developments and a housing innovation fund that would provide various types of financing options.

**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?**

I support a fair and progressive tax system. I support many of the recommendations offered by the DC Tax Revenue Commission including:

- Reducing the tax burden on low-income residents by increasing the personal exemption and standard deduction to the federal level;
- Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit to childless workers; and
- Raising the estate tax threshold from \$1 million to \$5.25 million

**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?**

I do not support public financing of political campaigns. This questionnaire has outlined a myriad of needs and issues facing District residents that require taxpayer funding. Public resources should be used to fund items such as affordable housing, caring for the homeless, and providing tax equity. In short, we have greater priorities that demand public funding long before dedicating taxpayer resources to fund the political aspirations of all people. Further, I would support banning corporate contributions and seek more transparency in financial reporting requirements.

**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?**

Yes, we should be concerned about the trend of children in traditional public schools dramatically declining. Our priority should be to ensure that DC Public Schools provide high performing, neighborhood schools with the latest technology. DC Public Schools should also be the preferred destination for DC students. However, healthy competition and student choice are critical to educating DC students to their full potential.

**8) What is your opinion of the DC United soccer stadium land swap proposal?**

The construction of a new soccer stadium presents an opportunity for Ward 6 and the District to create job opportunities and spur development; however the financial package must be beneficial for District taxpayers. The land swap component of the current proposal is concerning because it involves relinquishing the DC government owned

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Reeves Center. The final agreement must include community benefits and input from local residents.

**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?**

We must preserve the diversity of Ward 6 by providing for long-term residents with the same energy that we provide for new residents. Long-term residents should feel comfortable staying in their homes without fear of losing them to rises in property taxes and we must provide transportation options to allow seniors to ride the metro bus for free during non-peak hours.