

## ECONOMY AND 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. However, this growth has not benefited many people, especially low-income and unemployed DC residents. How would you leverage taxpayer funds for economic development in ways that would benefit the neediest DC residents?

- *Improve compliance with the City's First Source and other Employment Agreements to ensure that city residents are being hired and improve how the City holds developers and contractors, accountable for non-compliance.*
- *Provide intensive support services to "hard to employ" residents, including ex-offenders, mother's with young children, and former substance abusers.*
- *Establish an initiative that serves 18-24 year olds without a GED or high school diploma but who are within 6-8 months of completing their courses. This initiative should provide assistance with study habits, test-taking skills, career planning, and goal setting in addition to counseling for college admissions, financial aid, and certificate/training programs at community colleges.*

2. Seattle has enacted a minimum wage of \$15.00. San Francisco will vote on a ballot initiative in November of \$15.00. The mayor of Los Angeles has proposed a minimum wage of \$13.25, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel supports a \$13.00 wage for Chicago. Should DC set its sights higher? If so, to what level and in what time frame?

*Last year I was a leader of the movement that resulted in raising the DC minimum wage to \$11.50/hour over a few years. This resulted in a national movement of cities increasing their minimum wage to this level and even higher, and as you said Seattle and San Francisco are looking at \$15. I believe that, having led the movement, we should now follow suit and go for \$15 here in a reasonable time frame but ASAP. In addition, tipped workers are stuck at less than \$3/hour; their minimum wage should be at least 70 percent of the minimum for other workers. I also firmly believe that the minimum wage should increase over time with inflation, so that we don't find ourselves in this situation every decade.*

## TAXATION

3. In 2014, the DC Council enacted significant changes in tax law, many of which were recommended by the Tax Revision Commission. What do you think of these changes? What further changes would you propose, if any?

*Despite its progressive reputation, DC has a very regressive tax structure with low-income residents paying much more than those who are better off financially. This has to change, both for equity and to tap into the resources necessary to create the vibrant, livable city we all want. The recent tax code changes are in the right direction, but are de minimis compared to what needs to be done. Since the sales and property taxes are inherently regressive, we need to make the income tax much more progressive to compensate. We shouldn't be afraid of the old canard that the well-to-do will abandon the city because of taxes: among many reasons for this is the fact that there is an in-migration of the wealthy due to the breakdown of the regional transportation system, and that's not going to change anytime soon.*

## ELECTION REFORM

4. Do you think that public financing of elections is an effective way to reduce the influence of large contributors on legislation? If yes, what model do you favor? If not, what alternative do you recommend?

*I absolutely believe in public financing to limit the influence of large contributors. As it is now, the large contributors drown out the voices of everyone else, contrary to democratic principles. Perhaps the easiest way is to create a fund by allowing people to contribute a few dollars from their income taxes like the Federal Presidential campaign checkoff. However, the amount needs to increase over time so that, unlike the Federal system, it doesn't become irrelevant over time. I propose that candidates receive matching funds for each contribution up to some limit, say \$100.*

5. The electoral system in DC allows candidates to be elected to office with a plurality, not a majority, of votes. Do you support any type of runoff system of voting? If yes, what mechanism do you favor? If not, why not?

*The current system, without a runoff, has created serious anomalies in the past, with victorious candidates who never would have been elected with any reasonable runoff system. Elected officials push back against runoffs because of the cost, perhaps with the subtext "Why mess with the system that got me here?" The obvious and economical solution is instant runoff voting. As a second best, given no majority in the first round, we should vote a second time between the two top candidates.*

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

6. How do you propose we better use development projects on public land for affordable housing, particularly housing for low-income residents?

- *Require Agencies with responsibility for housing to develop higher targeted affordable housing production goals, including more subsidized senior housing and better managed public housing units.*
- *Mandate that the creation of an Affordable Housing Master Plan, that includes the redevelopment of all appropriate surplus/underutilized city owned land, buildings, tax properties into affordable/senior housing units, and fast track housing developments which provide the largest number and percentage of affordable units.*
- *Increase funding for existing programs, e.g. the Housing Production Trust Fund, Home Purchase Assistance, and Rapid Re-Housing, for low and moderate income residents so that they can buy homes and obtain rent subsidies, Increase funding for the city's compliance and oversight efforts to ensure the development and preservation of affordable housing.*
- *Reduce the barriers in such projects to housing that prevent families and individuals from securing stable housing, such as credit requirements and criminal background checks.*

7. Are our rent control laws adequate? If not, what can be done to reduce the burden on tenants?

*Our rent control laws are not adequate, and in addition rent control itself is under attack, with some on the Council wanting to end it. I think we should continue it and expand it. In addition, an expansion of affordable*

housing as I mentioned in #6 may create opportunities for renters to move into different kinds of units.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

8. 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. Charter schools suck funding out of the public school system while not performing any better than public schools and often performing worse. While there are arguments about the figures, it seems that charters receive more per pupil than the public schools, and are less responsible. Thus there are intersections in the city where every corner has a charter school, while other neighborhoods aren't served at all. Charter schools expel many more pupils, who then go back to the public system, without any penalty and even get paid for "educating" them for the rest of the year. At the very least we should require that the charters refund several times what they would have been paid for every pupil they expel. They should also be required to locate in neighborhoods convenient to the pupils, not locations that are convenient for them. And most importantly, per-pupil funding should be equalized.*

*Steps should also be taken to make DCPS more competitive. From 2007 to 2013, DCPS 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade average reading scores on NAEP went up 28 points for higher income pupils but only two points for those from lower income families. At the current rate of increase, it would take 132 years for the percentage of black pupils who are proficient in reading to equal the current percentage of white pupils. Instead of the current Rhee/Henderson strategy of testing, intimidation, and punishment, real school reform should embody respect, collaboration, and support for children, parents, and educators.*

## EAST OF THE RIVER

9. With respect to development at St. Elizabeth's Hospital campus, what can the Council do to protect the interests of and maximize the benefits to those currently living east of the Anacostia River?

*Traditional urban renewal has translated into Negro removal, and this has to stop. We should "right size" the pace of development so our neighborhoods are not overwhelmed by the complexity of the process, with issues of density, gentrification, retail and dislocation of long time residents. This would involve mandating coordination and partnership with appropriate city agencies and neighborhoods who are facing development pressures so that the city is advocating for the residents' vision of their communities, not that of the development community, and ensure a "level playing field."*

## PLANNING

10. The Executive's zoning, planning and historic preservation functions report through the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). In your view, does this structure work well for the city? If not, how would you alter it?

*Zoning and planning should be for the benefit of the residents of the city, with other interests secondary. Within that context, the desired result should drive the process rather than, as all too often happens, the other way around. I look forward to working with you to define the appropriate goals and procedures of this process.*