

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?

If a project benefits from city resources--whether it be the soccer stadium, the streetcar, or the redevelopment of Walter Reed--the city needs to benefit from it as well. This benefit is largely through the creation of jobs and affordable housing for District residents. Upfront we need to have a firm grasp of:

- 1. How many and what types of jobs will be created through both the construction and implementation of the project;**
- 2. What training needs to be put in place so District residents can be job-ready for these opportunities;**
- 3. Enforceable job targets for hiring DC residents and clawbacks if they are not met;**
- 4. A strategy for preserving the affordable housing currently in the path of this development;**
- 5. Clear and enforceable targets for creating affordable housing**

One effort I helped implement into law during my time at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute was the creation of a workforce intermediary. This is a comprehensive approach to economic development that has proven successful. An intermediary model was used at the Marriott Marquis, and I am told by the hotel workers' union that 65 percent of the workers at the hotel are DC residents and many were hired through the training program put in place by the intermediary. A recent article in the Washington Post explained that housekeepers initially earn about \$13 an hour and if they stay for six months quickly move up to \$18. It is still tough to live in DC on \$18 an hour, but with our strong earned income tax credit it makes it a bit more doable.

As your at-large councilmember, I will demand from the mayor and deputy mayor for economic development that jobs and affordable housing are negotiated upfront as part of any benefits deal. And I will hold them, as well as the developers, accountable.

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?

Yes, DC was a leader on the minimum wage, and we are quickly being trumped! But I don't think we should minimize our success in getting an \$11.50 an hour wage by 2016 and then indexed for inflation. I worked closely with DC for Democracy, the United Food and Commercial Workers union, and others last year to secure the increase that went

into effect this July, and it was an enormous victory. Even in the progressive/labor community some were skeptical that we could raise the minimum wage legislatively, but thanks to tireless advocacy throughout the region, the wage increase eventually passed the D.C. Council on a vote of 13 to 0 AND was adopted in neighboring counties, raising wages for workers throughout the region. I'm very supportive of efforts to raise the wage further, and thrilled to see victories in other parts of the country that can serve as a model for D.C. over the coming years.

I'm proud of the approach we took, asking economists to analyze the impact of this wage level on the economy. When we get to 2016, I'd like to revisit that discussion.

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?

In the end, I felt the package was a good compromise for city residents, because it reduced taxes for middle and low-income filers, who currently pay a larger share of their income in D.C. taxes than the wealthy do. I was especially pleased by the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for childless workers. The EITC is a critical work support and powerful anti-poverty tool. I would like to work with my colleagues on the council to find more common-sense ways to battle poverty and inequality through our fiscal policy.

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?

Yes! I am very supportive of public financing because it levels the playing field. Councilmember Grosso asked me to lead an advisory group on ethics when he was first elected, and that group suggested he introduce a New York-style public financing bill, which he has now done. The current campaign finance system, in which candidates are expected to spend the majority of their time soliciting large sums of money from wealthy donors if they are to be competitive, breeds corruption and perverts our political process. But I don't just talk the talk about campaign finance reform, I walk the walk by refusing contributions from corporations and special interest PACs.

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?

I would love to learn more about the particulars of different voting systems (and how we can best educate the public in any transition), but I absolutely support electoral system reform to ensure that voters can cast ballots based on true preferences not strategy, and have those preferences reflected in the results of our elections. We should also consider reforms to our party primary system, given that 76 percent of our voters are registered in a single party.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

We need to aggressively enforce the deals and laws already on the books, and negotiate all further deals with a specific eye toward increasing public benefits, especially affordable housing. Often the debate around development projects proceeds as though we are trapped in the 1980s, desperate for any kind of development. As the first question on this questionnaire points out, the D.C. real estate market and the economic fortunes of D.C.'s wealthiest citizens are vibrant. Businesses want to be here, developers want to develop here, and public land is a valuable asset that should be maximized for the good of the public. There is a bill currently before the council that addresses this issue, and I am very supportive of that legislation.

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

No, our rent control laws are not adequate -- its coverage is limited, and we are losing affordable rental housing at a rapid rate. I think we need to take a comprehensive approach to our affordable housing crisis that addresses every aspect of the crisis, from homelessness to the wealth-building needs of working and middle-class families. That means creating a plan to close D.C. general, strengthening tenant protections (especially enforcement and tenant advocacy) to preserve the affordable housing we have, building more affordable housing by funding the Housing Production Trust Fund at least \$100 million per year, investing more in assistance for renters, and expanding programs to make homeownership accessible to working families. To learn more, visit http://www.elissa2014.com/housing_and_homelessness

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?

We should be very concerned about the fact that this trend does not represent a considered choice by policymakers and the community. Charters can play an important role in improving the public school system by serving as laboratories of innovation, offering special programming, and sometimes providing high-quality options to students who otherwise lack them, but I believe that our top priority should be building a strong DCPS. I do not support, and do not believe my colleagues support, a New Orleans-style experiment in all-charter public schooling, yet there is no plan in place to coordinate between DCPS and DC public charters, and no choice has been made about what level is the right level.

As your at-large councilmember, I will focus on the following:

- 1. Focusing the chancellor, the mayor, the deputy mayor for education and my colleagues on where are we going with our bifurcated DCPS/Charter system**
- 2. Making sure DCPS and charter school budgets are transparent and clear**
- 3. Facilitating coordination between DCPS and the charter system**
- 4. Acting as a resource and advocate for parents and community members**
- 5. Pursuing innovative approaches to building a better DCPS, such as suggesting that our new DCPS middle schools have a “planning principal” to help develop the school, including working with parents to make that school a success when it opens.**

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?

On an federal projects, I will work with Del. Norton, as well as General Services Administration head Dan Tangherlini on making sure we are working with the feds to make sure that contractors hire DC residents. I think we also need to push to keep the campus as open as possible, so it is not a walled-off community. We want the economic benefits to spill out into the community.

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?

Many residents are frustrated with the zoning process, so I think it could work better. I'd like to explore what other cities do.