

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Brian Hobson

City/Town: Park Rapids

Legislative District: HD 5A

Party: DFL

Candidate responses in italics.

1. In July 2021, a [national poll](#) found that 68% of the public believes that elected officials are not paying enough attention to the rising cost of housing and ensuring everyone can afford a place to live. **What do you believe is the role of government in ensuring everyone has a place to call home?**

Affordable and available housing is in my top priorities. I think making sure that all folks have a safe, reasonably comfortable place to live is a basic function of government, along with making sure that young folks have access to public education and everyone has affordable and accessible healthcare close to home.

2. Nearly all counties in Minnesota (92%) are not able to provide sufficient shelter or temporary housing to those who are homeless. **What will you do to end homelessness?**

I think that housing first policies are the right thing. This happens by being creative in our smaller rural communities. This may mean rethinking zoning rules that prioritize single family detached housing, prohibit accessory dwellings in small towns, and eliminate or make communal housing unwelcome. We cannot let the perfect solution that eliminates a problem once and for all get in the way of good solutions that can help people now while we work long term to build better support systems for folks who don't have a place to live.

3. Emergency rental assistance keeps people stably housed, as we saw with federal pandemic-related funding. Historically, nonpayment of rent is the most common reason landlords evict their tenants. During times of financial crisis, families without access to financial resources may be displaced, evicted, or even become homeless. **What will you do to prevent evictions?**

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rules that prioritize single family detached housing, prohibit accessory dwellings in small towns, and eliminate or make communal housing unwelcome. We cannot let the perfect solution that eliminates a problem once and for all get in the way of good solutions that can help people now while we work long term to build better support systems for folks who don't have a place to live.

4. Minnesota's housing crisis disproportionately harms families of color, especially Black and Indigenous households. Minnesota is one of the worst states in the nation for racial disparities in homeownership. Additionally, 58 percent of Black renters are paying more than they can afford on housing costs. **What meaningful steps will you take to eliminate racial disparities in housing?**

These disparities exist because folks who are poor are more likely to be people of color. I think meaningful steps to eliminate racial disparities would necessitate helping folks who are poor gain access to housing. My above answer regarding preventing evictions speaks to the need for people to have work, and be paid fair wages that allow them to afford dignified housing. Growing labor participation and ensuring fair wages and benefits and building greater housing stock specifically for, but not exclusively for people of color and people in rural communities with currently very low income will help build wealth over time.

5. There are approximately 170,000 renter households in the state that earn less than \$31,200 per year. But rental assistance is only available to one out of every four income-qualifying households. Even though more than 100,000 lowest income households need homes, the state only supports the production of 100 homes each year for these families. **What will you do to support the housing needs of those at the lowest income level in Minnesota?**

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6. Energy efficiency improvements in multifamily buildings and weatherizing single family homes improve indoor air quality, eliminate drafts, and protect residents from extreme cold and heat—delivering health benefits and lower health care

costs. What strategies do you support to improve housing conditions and reduce utility costs?

For new construction, while an added expense up front, the payback over time is pretty dramatic. Retrofitting existing, especially very old building, can be laborious and expensive (I have experienced and participated in both strategies). Other than some kind of super low interest loans that landlords and low income homeowners can access for these improvements, I don't have very specific ideas on how to rehab our older housing stock in the small rural towns. I think the advent of spray foam insulation that can be more efficiently installed in older construction without a complete gutting of the interior may be an example of a technical fix. I am quite sure that rehabbing older housing is likely less costly on the whole than building enough new housing.

7. Minnesota's home values are increasing rapidly, constraining low- and middle-income families from achieving affordable homeownership, including more than 64,000 households of color. **What steps will you take to increase opportunities for renters to purchase homes, condos, or cooperative ownership models?**

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8. Including the recommendations of the community when developing policies and programs is a best practice for effective and lasting solutions. **How will you include those most impacted by housing needs in developing and implementing housing solutions?**

Folks who cannot or can barely afford housing are not those who are likeliest to show up to meeting in which housing solutions are discussed. We have to go find people who are impacted. We are allowed weight the experiences and needs of unhoused or unsecurely housed folks above those of wealthier people who don't like multi-family housing, folks who assume accessory dwellings will decrease property values, or just plain NIMBYs, who don't like change.