

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Clarice Grabau

City/Town: Northfield

Legislative District: SD58

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?**

Everyone deserves a safe, dignified, affordable place to live, and government plays an important role in ensuring this. As a City Councilor and member of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, I have worked hard to bring more housing of all types to my community, particularly affordable housing, and I've seen firsthand how incredibly challenging it is to build. The rising cost of materials and land have made the challenge even greater, and cities need more help from the State. We need greater investment in public/private partnerships, incentives for developers to build affordable housing, and protection and rehabilitation of the important existing inventory of affordable housing we already have.

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?**

We need to work to create pathways out of homelessness while also keeping Minnesotans who are currently unsheltered safe. This means supporting and partnering with local organizations that are on the ground and doing this work today. It means investing in shelter capital while also working to address the greater issues that lead to homelessness, like lack of healthcare and low wages. We also need to embed social workers into our public safety systems to help people get the resources they need when they need them, in order to prevent problems from compounding.

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?**

On both the Council and HRA, I've worked hard to create and support stronger tenant protections and to focus on reducing housing inequities in our community through rental assistance, utility assistance, and directing financial resources to the construction and maintenance of emergency and transitional housing. We've also worked to partner with residents, nonprofits, and the Attorney General's office to prevent evictions at one of our manufactured home parks, and have been successful in thwarting these efforts thanks to the tenacity of the residents themselves who have organized, the AG's office, City staff and officials, and community members who have come together to say, "This is not acceptable in our community."

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?**

In addition to the above, we need to work hard to advance homeownership and wealth building opportunities. Longstanding discriminatory practices have prevented communities of color from accessing home ownership and we must build up programs that assist low-income families with ownership, such as downpayment assistance and help with attaining needed credit. Local land use decisions also play a critical role in determining where communities of color live and what resources are available to them.

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?**

I have worked hard to address the needs of those at the lowest income levels along the entire housing spectrum - renters, homeowners, single and multi-family housing, manufactured homeowners, seniors and first-time homebuyers. We need the State to do more to help small cities as they don't have the capacity to meet this need, which has profound and long-reaching impacts throughout a community. Examples of assistance I've supported include the issuance of grants and forgivable loans for emergency and transitional housing, downpayment assistance, Aging in Place grants, manufactured home rehab and repair programs, rental and utility assistance, greater use of CDBG funds, preservation of existing affordable housing, strong collaboration with community partners who are critical to this work, and thoughtful, measured, land use decisions. I would also like to see the State increase the Community

Homeownership Impact Fund to provide more funding for developers and administrators of single family, owner-occupied affordable housing.

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?**

Energy efficiency improvements for single family homes, manufactured housing, and multifamily buildings are important for both reducing energy costs and transitioning to a clean energy future. I'm proud to have helped create and pass both an ambitious Climate Action Plan and a new Sustainable Building Policy in Northfield, both of which help incentivize greener building standards. Specifically, we need greater assistance for insulation and infiltration work, furnace maintenance, venting of water heaters, heating and exhaust systems, and more. There is a particular need for persons who are trained in the rehabilitation and repair of manufactured homes, as manufactured homes play an important role in providing affordable housing. There is a great need for licensed and insured contractors who can complete rehabilitation work and partner with homeowners and manufactured home park managers to ensure compliance with safety, regulatory, contractual, and code regulations.

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?**

In addition to the above, I support legislation that would protect manufactured home park residents from the abrupt sale of their parks to outside companies who often do not have their best interests at heart. We have seen this recently in my community, and if elected to the Senate, I would like to work with my colleagues in the legislature to advance legislation that would use tax incentives to encourage park owners to give residents the first opportunity to purchase if desired, similar to the Frank Adelman Manufactured Housing Community Sustainability Act. I would also like to see the State and cities partner with organizations such as Northcountry Cooperative to help residents of manufactured housing communities organize and purchase the land beneath their homes.

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?**

It's important to have all stakeholders at the table, including homeowners, renters, and Minnesotans who are experiencing housing insecurity. This is

something I've tried hard to do as a local elected official - to listen, show up, be accessible and responsive, to make decisions that are rooted in compassion, and to use the resources available to me to make change where I am.