

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Jeff Brand

City/Town: Saint Peter

Legislative District: HD18A

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?**

Housing is a human right and I want to invest in populations where housing is most out of reach. To be a good partner with agencies and non-profits across that the state that work with Counties and Cities. And to wisely leverage state tax dollars to secure funding from our federal partners to increase the pot of money available across the state.

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 support increasing the pot of funding for all types of housing because right now as it exists, non-profits are competing against one another to address the same issues statewide. For instance, IF the Greater Mankato area has \$500k, Partners for Housing and fellow local organizations would be able to solve the problem of no housing for the majority of people in need. Right now they compete with every other mid-sized city and organization in the state.

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?**

I've been told there are several people that didn't access funding despite organizations urging renters to fill out the paperwork. Partners for Housing stated to me they even tried to assist the tenants fill out the paperwork but they had no success. The paperwork is a barrier, then we must streamline the

process. There has to be a safety net in place to give people facing eviction a stable place to fall back on so they can pick up the pieces and move forward. I have done so in the past and I believe it has made a difference.

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?**

Challenges in racial disparities go back to the times of redlining - which there is evidence that it occurred in Mankato at one point in history as it did in many other communities across Minnesota. BIPOC communities have had a harder time and more apparent racial disparities. We need systemic change and investment in home purchasing assistance so that our BIPOC neighbors are provided more stability.

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?**

It comes down to providing the means of producing more than the 100 homes. There are 863 communities across the state and each one has some level of need. One hundred homes aren't realistic enough of a number to help with the problem. As mentioned in the question, rental assistance can help support more families and so I favor an increase.

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?**

When I was a councilmember in Saint Peter, we partnered with MVAC to identify the oldest homes with the most weatherization and exterior needs. We set a threshold by income level, and developed a program administered by MVAC and facilitated with city and state dollars. We set out to work with those homeowners to take advantage of the no interest loan / partial grant. The EDA professionals in each community could easily implement this sort of program with state funding or a federal match - which I support.

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?

It's a supply issue. There are more people compared to units of housing available. It's been a troubling trend for a very long time. In the Greater Mankato area, homes sell before the signs are placed in the front yard. Apartment complexes are rented out before the grand opening takes place. There is a fine balance in this process and I think we need to meet this challenge head on. As mentioned above, a round of down payment assistance can help BIPOC and low-income home buyers. On the front end it could involve evaluation of building code for ways to make pricing affordable. It could involve artificially reducing the cost of the 5 most common resources in the construction process. We could also amend existing building code to reflect new building materials that can compete against traditional materials.

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?**

By including them in the discussion. The Senate GOP and the House DFL have in recent years developed diverging narratives on housing. Cherry picking a narrative that voters got it wrong on rent caps but also doing nothing to address the need only harms communities in need of collaboration. The Senate has become an adversary on the issues of inclusion and equity and this is troubling. The Legislature must take up the banner of housing need and implement strategies to create the most extensive plan for meeting needs across the state with the relatively small portion of the budget it is allocated.