

# Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

# 2022



## Kari Rehrauer

**City/Town:** Coon Rapids

**Legislative District:** SD 35

**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?**

*We have really almost no public housing system in the U.S. and that includes Minnesota. Unfortunately, we have become more reliant on tax credits for developers to encourage them to build affordable housing, such as the Section 42 Tax Credit. This is not working. These are for-profit companies that aren't necessarily concerned about the community nor the residents. I have been working on a problem with Dominion where they are raising their rents 12.5% this year because this is allowed under Section 42. Many of the seniors in the "affordable" complex here in Coon Rapids have to move out before this increase takes place for them. We are one of the richest nations in the world and yet so many folks cannot afford housing. I think this is wrong.*

*This is a huge, complex issue, but we must get to a place where there is public affordable housing. I am an enthusiastic supporter of good, affordable, clean and healthy housing for all people, regardless of their age. As a City Council Member in my community, I have always advocated for such housing including senior housing. The state government should try a number of pilot projects for public affordable housing with a focus on safety along with affordability. They should model the public housing projects that have worked and learn from the mistakes of the failed projects.*

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 believe that we should strive to provide housing for anyone who wants it. This is again a multi-layered problem because even if we provide funding for building shelters and homes, there are many cities that do not allow for a shelter in their*

*city codes. We will need to partner with cities and educate them on how a homeless shelter is a benefit to the community and again share the type of projects that have worked (Hope for Youth, Stepping Stone).*

*This also has to be a community-wide approach that includes state funding for prevention of homelessness and transition support (paid family and medical leave, affordable healthcare, affordable childcare, access to mental health resources, etc.)*

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 support funding for emergency rental assistance.*

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?**

*A percentage of the funding for housing must be set aside specifically for BIPOC communities and tribal nations and a percentage. The Justice40 at the federal level is a great model for this.*

*<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>.*

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 support increasing rental assistance so that it is available to all income-qualifying households. I also support greatly increasing the production of homes. There are new projects, such as indoor or outdoor tiny home communities, that are showing promise.*

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?**

*I am currently on the Partners in Energy task force with Xcel Energy and the City of Coon Rapids. We are working on a citywide plan to improve energy*

*efficiency in Coon Rapids. We are really hoping for state funding so that we can give homeowners, multi-unit owners, and business owners grants for energy efficient HVAC systems and upgrading their insulation. As a Senator, I believe we should invest in this because not only do you see all the benefits listed in your question, it also will help to mitigate climate change.*

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?**

*We need to expand down payment assistance programs and work to create low interest home loans for qualifying incomes.*

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 is important to actively do outreach as an elected official. This means meeting people where they are- where they live and work. Going into the community, building relationships first so that you can listen and learn from their experiences.*