

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Reed Olson

City/Town: Bemidji

Legislative District: HD2A

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?**

Government has the ultimate role in housing our most vulnerable neighbors. Government has a direct role in creating housing.

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?**

Housing ends homelessness. I will promote policies that produce more housing.

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?**

We need to move supportive housing out of the for-profit sector. Supportive housing should be created and maintained by organizations with housing people, not blind profit, as their guiding principle. We should also continue to help families pay owed back rent. It is much cheaper for society (and less traumatizing for families) to stabilize housing and prevent people from falling into homelessness.

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?**

I operate a homeless shelter in Bemidji. Anishinabe are over represented in our shelters. I see the results of systemically racist housing policies everyday. We need more housing across the board. Only when there is housing scarcity, can landlords raise rents to such unethical levels. And it wouldn't hurt if developers of future workforce and supportive housing we non profit seeking developers.

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?**

We need to invest more resources in MHFA. We need to invest more in the Office of Economic Opportunity, which in part funds Community Action Programs. And as I said in previous responses, we need to build more 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?**

At risk of being a broken record, CAP agencies do a lot to help families winterize their homes. Available funds are their limiting factor. Counties and electric/gas utilities could step up their game as well.

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?**

More homes would bring down the prices. The Fed's cruel policy of hiking interest rates isn't helping low and middle income families access home ownership.

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?**

I am on the state's Taskforce on Shelters. We have people with lived experience on the taskforce. We also do lots of outreach to people with lived experience to learn from their perspectives. We could create a taskforce on housing, that would recommend policy to the legislature. The taskforce could be centered on the voices of those without stable housing.