

# Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

# 2022



## Rick Blake

**City/Town:** Grand Rapids

**Legislative District:** HD6A

**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?**

*I believe that everyone has a right to decent, safe, and sanitary housing. The government should adequately fund programs so decent, safe, and sanitary housing is within everyone's reach. Programs similar to the FHA 235 program should also be widely available so that first-time home buyers can afford the housing payments.*

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 would favor funding tiny house developments as well as funding for temporary housing shelters like Grace House in Itasca County.*

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 propose funding emergency housing assistance for families in financial crisis through local Community Action Agencies.*

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?**

*The word that programs are available to assist with the cost of housing needs to be effectively communicated to BIPOC families. Community Action Agencies and other agencies with close contact with BICPOC community should get assistance in marketing these programs. There is no excuse for past discrimination in these programs and aggressive action to end these disparities needs to take place.*

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 funding rental assistance programs to the level of need.*

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?**

*Adequately fund the energy assistance programs available through CAP agencies. This might also involve adjusting income guidelines so more families are eligible. The great thing about this is that every month there will be savings to the families who participate, freeing up funds for other needs.*

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?**

*Adequately fund the energy assistance programs available through CAP agencies. This might also involve adjusting income guidelines so more families are eligible. The great thing about this is that every month there will be savings to the families who participate, freeing up funds for other needs.*

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?**

*Ask them for input. Soliciting feedback from agencies like the Minnesota Housing Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, and CAP agencies would also be helpful.*