

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Sandra Feist

City/Town: New Brighton

Legislative District: HD 39B

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 basic human right, as well as a policy issue that impacts the lives of all residents in a community. Therefore, the government should be actively involved in ensuring strategic, equitable, and quality 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?**

One could come at this question from myriad directions, from mental healthcare, zoning ordinances, to a deep assessment of the inherent racial inequities in housing policies across the state and country. There have been two main areas where I have been involved and plan to stay involved when it comes to homeless and housing policy. First, I was proud to be the chief author of Hennepin County's homelessness supplemental budget request, making permanent the programs that were temporarily funded during the pandemic. These programs provide immediate shelter along with supports to help people experiencing homelessness transition permanently to stable housing. Second, I have focused my energy around manufactured housing rights, as this is one key source of affordable housing. I chief authored several bills pertaining to the residents' opportunity to purchase the land, creating constraints on rent increases, and addressing misdeeds by landlords around utility costs.

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 pass common sense legislation ensuring that renters have sufficient notice of evictions. I was surprised in my first term that this was not a bipartisan area of consensus, but I saw troubling intransigence by opponents who did not want to ensure that tenants received timely notice of a possible eviction and the opportunity to avoid eviction. We also need to pass legislation such as the "Bring it Home" bill (HF 2220) that would provide rental assistance to struggling renters. I was a proud co-author of this legislation, which is strongly supported in my district.

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?**

This is a huge issue because it compounds the racial wealth gap, because so much wealth is related to home ownership. To address this, we must address the path to home ownership as well as providing support to Black residents upon purchasing a home. We need to tackle housing supply constraints and affordability and simultaneously promote an equitable and accessible housing finance system to ensure that Black borrowers – targeted historically for sub-prime mortgages – are able to access fair terms for mortgages from lenders. Once Black residents purchase homes, we need to provide societal supports to ensure sustainable homeownership. I am currently working with local leaders in New Brighton on legislation to support home buyers from these marginalized communities. I'm very excited by this partnership.

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 would point again to resident-owned manufactured home cooperatives as one way to efficiently expand affordable housing. We also need to demand that any new residential development contain an affordable element, and provide incentives to developers to include affordable units. We also need to seriously look at zoning regulations – in the way that California is out of sheer necessity – to expand the availability of multi-unit dwellings. Diversity of housing is good for communities and good for low-income residents.

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?**

Weatherization and energy efficiency have been a topic of great interest at the state and federal level. These investments often come up in the context of climate action, but as noted here, they also impact the quality of lives of struggling home owners burdened by aging homes and high utility costs. Tax incentives and subsidies to help these home owners are definitely worthwhile from both a standpoint of enhancing the quality of life for Minnesotans and protecting our natural resources and facilities from the impact of 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?**

I was proud to introduce an "opportunity to purchase" bill relating to manufactured housing last session. This type of legislation would enable residents in manufactured housing communities to own the land beneath their homes. This would give them the ability to control their rent and make investments collectively in their community. We have seen in my Senate District the positive impact of resident-ownership on these communities. As mentioned above, I've been in conversations with local leaders in New Brighton who are passionate about affordable housing and housing policy more broadly to develop legislation to support home buyers from marginalized communities.

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've worked closely with residents in manufactured housing communities on legislation impacting them, as well as with local leaders in my district to carefully address unmet needs or mine opportunities for bipartisan success in the housing policy area. I also work closely with advocates who represent low-income Minnesotans in the legislature to ensure that I'm taking into account the real lived experience and real-world challenges of these communities. Manufactured housing policy and home ownership legislation are both particular areas of bipartisanship in this policy area that is very divided. I am particularly interested in working on legislation that can pass into law in a purple state and these two areas provide that opportunity for success.