

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Steve Cwodzinski

City/Town: Eden Prairie

Legislative District: SD 49

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 the government should play a role in ensuring that everyone has a place to call home. This can be achieved through a variety of policies including promoting and funding the creation of affordable housing, bolstering our overall housing stock, and providing assistance to renters and low income homeowners to reduce the amount of traumatizing evictions and foreclosures.

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?**

The first step to ending homelessness in Minnesota is to stop the needless creation of situations where folks become homeless. Many of these are through evictions for non-payment of rent. I support programs that will provide rental assistance. For our neighbors that are already homeless, I support the funding of resources to get them housed no matter their background.

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?**

The Biden administration's Emergency Rental Assistance helped keep hundreds of thousands of people in their homes during the pandemic, preventing disruption and death during a deadly pandemic. We must learn from this enormous success and continue to provide emergency rental assistance to folks on the edge of losing their home.

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 racial disparities in Minnesota are alarming. We need to first stop digging ourselves into a hole. Before Covid, the eviction rates for Black families were almost 2X that of White families. Curbing our eviction numbers through rental assistance and other programs can help stem the tide of our racial disparities. We also need to have more resources for first time home-buyers.

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?**

Promoting and funding the creation of affordable housing, bolstering our overall housing stock, and providing assistance to renters and low income homeowners are all needed to support the housing needs of those at the lowest income level in Minnesota.

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?**

Improving housing conditions and reducing utility costs not only help our low-income residents, but also make a difference in our state combating climate change. I support credits and incentive programs that equip homes with energy efficient improvements

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?**

Purchasing a home can be an important step in someone's journey to being financially secure. It is important to have housing stock of all shapes and sizes for those looking to purchase or cooperatively own a home. I support incentive programs for cooperative ownership models and I support and want to encourage cities' practicing their right to eliminate exclusive zoning that prohibits growth and affordability.

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?**

To include those most impacted by housing needs in decision making, I will listen closely to organizations that know firsthand the importance of these decisions. This includes organizations like Minnesota Housing Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, and the expertise from our Department of Human Services and Minnesota Housing. Most importantly, I will connect with constituents on this issue and hear their concerns.