

# Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

# 2022



## Walter Hudson

**City/Town:** Albertville

**Legislative District:** HD30A

**Party:** R

*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?**

*The role of government is to regulate against specific predictable torts, but otherwise allow the market to respond to consumer needs. Currently, regulations at all levels of government, along with the local NIMBY phenomenon which manifests through planning and zoning, prevents developers from providing a full spectrum of housing for all income levels and stages of life.*

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 largest contributor to homelessness is lack of services for drug addiction and mental health issues, not lack of housing. The state should revisit past models for providing institutional inpatient services for those in need of significant intervention. We should look at it as a necessary public good to enable safety and quality of life. The goal of such institutions should be restoration of self-determination and ability to function in society. But services should be continued indefinitely for those who cannot achieve that goal.*

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?**

*Referencing an earlier answer, I believe the systemic solution to evictions is an adequate supply of housing for all income levels and stages of life. People*

*should have another vine to grasp, so to speak, which will support the weight of their current financial limitations. Government subsidy of rent without broader systemic reform enabling more affordable housing will not solve the eviction problem.*

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?**

*If you approach the issue from that perspective, you will end up missing the forest from the trees. Again referencing my earlier answer, it's all connected. You have racial disparities in housing because you have income disparities. Therefore, the solution remains on the supply side. If we tweak regulation - and municipal zoning authority in particular - we can facilitate the development of affordable housing which services all income levels. Subsidizing payments on the consumer side without addressing the supply bottleneck only calcifies the current disparity and makes the need for such subsidy permanent.*

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'm sensing a theme. Again, the answer here is an outside-the-box view of what housing municipalities allow. We should mitigate the NIMBY effect by limiting the sorts of restrictions and interventions municipalities can make to proposed housing developments. This will enable the development of affordable housing suitable for all income levels.*

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'm not certain how the state can intervene in this area without contradicting the larger goal of facilitating lower housing costs. Certainly, I support an all-of-the-above energy policy which prioritizes abundant, affordable, and reliable power. That will certainly keep utility costs under control relative to the alternatives which have caused skyrocketing prices and grid issues in other states.*

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?**

*Again, I believe this is the wrong way to approach the issue. Rather than start from "how do we increase opportunities to X," we need to look at the underlying cause of the problem and take our proverbial axe to the root. Home values are increasing rapidly because of inflation. Inflation has resulted from the prolonged state-imposed government shutdown coupled with wholly irresponsible government spending, dollar-printing, and issuance of debt. Any attempt to counter that with a consumer-side intervention will be like putting a Band-Aid on a broken arm. We need moderation in government, both in its spending and its heavy-handed approach to "solving problems." The market needs reliability, stability, and predictability in order to settle in a new spot and allow consumers to catch up. People want to buy homes. Developers and existing homeowners want to sell them. If government gets back in its lane and stays there, those two sides of the economic balance will find each other.*

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?**

*Currently, our governing processes are completely broken. Between omnibus bills and government shutdown brinkmanship leading to special sessions dictated behind closed doors, the public gets little to no meaningful input in deliberations surrounding public policy. At the local level, public comment has been increasingly restricted, and elected bodies have increasingly insulated themselves from directly and promptly addressing any petition for redress of grievance. We need to change all of that. We need to reform the legislative process to once again deliberate specific single-subject bills in a manner accessible to the public. We need to reform the municipal open meetings law to mandate conditions which place elected officials into meaningful engagement with their constituents. And we need to leverage technology to make the entire process easy for the public to monitor and interact with as they would a social media livestream, sporting event, or reality show.*