

Eckington Civic Association Ward 5 Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire

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Please respond to each question in 200-300 words. We know that you might have more to say on each topic, but shorter answers will better help residents digest these materials. Feel free to direct folks to other resources on your website if you have more to say than this space allows. Thank you!

Q1: Like many Ward 5 neighborhoods, Eckington is home to a significant amount of land that is currently zoned for industrial uses. In your view, what is the best use of that land and why?

Response:

As a whole, Washington, DC has more environmentally-friendly buildings and healthy, green spaces than most urban centers. Yet, it is well-known that our Ward 5 neighborhoods have benefited the least from our city's environmental development.

For decades, the majority of our city's industrial land use has been in Ward 5. This has degraded the quality of the air, limited our access to green spaces, and put the health of some of our residents in jeopardy. Much of this has been due to bad policy decisions and poor regulation, stemming from a period of housing segregation and redlining in our city's history, and continuing over decades with efforts to create business opportunity zones in and near our neighborhoods. In order to move us forward we must first acknowledge the harm that has been done to our communities and create the pathway to make it right and then focus on the following areas:

- Focus on revising the zoning code to buffer residential uses from the impacts of industrial uses and
- Partner with the community and local businesses, as primary advisers, to plan how to effectively transform the use of industrial land to encourage inclusion of retail, food, arts, green and recreational spaces. Following up on the work started in 2014 through the Ward 5 Industrial Land Transformation Study, which recommends we target 1000 acres of our industrial land for a hub or green, food, tech and creative businesses.
- Work to support small local businesses growth
- Local and federal funds have been allocated for our city to address climate change and environmental remedies. As councilmembers, I would ensure this funding is prioritized for Ward 5 projects that will mitigate industrial and other environmental hazards;
- Ensure Ward 5 communities should have priority access to city funding for energy-efficiency and environmental improvement projects;
- A whole-government approach to understanding and correcting our environmental issues is the most effective way of addressing policy, regulations and enforcement for environmental preservation and justice.

Q2: Eckington is bounded by four large arterial roads—New York Avenue, Florida Avenue, North Capitol Street, and Rhode Island Avenue. Do you think those corridors should be transformed, and if so, how?

Response:

The fastest approach to making streets in Eckington safer is to take a holistic approach to improving street safety for the entire neighborhood. Rethinking street safety in Eckington will have to be approached in a multimodal way to balance out the needs of the community – to prioritize all the ways members of the community use the roads. To meet the current needs of the community, I would focus in the following areas:

- Expanded public transportation access for more Ward 5 neighborhoods;
- Safe and protected routes for cyclists, pedestrians and other means of transportation;
- Plan toward the goal of reducing of car ownership and usage but work to meet the current multimodal transportation needs of residents and other community partners; and,
- Rethink our roadways to create fair and effective ways for neighbors to share the roads, prioritizing the safety of pedestrians.

My first approach would be to work with the community – ANC commissioners, the civic association, and neighbors – and DDOT to identify the issues plaguing the community regarding the influx of traffic to the community. The most important part is for DDOT to keep the lines of communication open with the community about possible solutions and to truly vet the potential solutions to help improve the immediate conditions and overall safety. I am committed to continuing to work closely with the community and DDOT to have treatments applied to problem areas to immediately slow down traffic in the community. There are basic levels of enforcement, traffic calming measures, providing buffering zones to slow traffic or discourage traffic from coming down neighborhood streets, raised crosswalks and pedestrian safety measures, strategically adding bike lanes where appropriate, realizing parking in the community is necessary, and adding signage to promote awareness are ways to make immediate strides toward safety. The most critical elements to getting to safer streets in Eckington are to keep the lines of communication open, think about street safety holistically through a multimodal lens, and to work WITH the community on finding the best solutions for overall safety.

Q3: Eckington has been impacted by armed carjackings and homicides in recent years. At the same time, Eckington residents have also expressed concerns about policing in D.C. How would you approach public safety as a Ward 5 Councilmember? Do you have thoughts about the revision of the D.C. criminal code that is underway or other policy changes being considered?

Response:

I believe in a balanced approach that includes prevention and intervention, as well as accountability, consequences, and responsiveness to stop the terror that is playing out in our communities. We need a public health approach that also includes coordination and communication between law enforcement, community-based organizations and our court system. As a community we have an opportunity to change the current climate of violence in our community by working to:

- Address the root causes of violence and crime and focus on holistic, community-centered solutions;
- Invest in prevention, intervention and appropriate responses
- Ensure that we have an adequate police force that can effectively serve our community; investing in training and best practices to reduce harm caused by police

and continuing to modernize our police force to enable positive partnerships with the community

- Refocus our systems on a more people-centered approach to violence and public safety
- Increase funding to support the growth and expansion of community-based mental health providers to meet the unique needs of communities and prioritize the ability of new mental health facilities to be located within communities with the greatest need
- Establish a Rapid Response team to offer immediate support to communities in crisis and experiencing violence but are not currently connected to a violence interruption partner. The Rapid Response team would include members from the ONSE office, OAG's Cure the Streets, and Building Blocks DC.
- Promote transparency regarding how funding is spent on public safety efforts by developing a comprehensive framework of public safety investments in the District.
- Scale community outreach efforts to share with communities what efforts are operating in the public safety space and how the programs/resources can be supportive of community needs (i.e. establish a website or portal where residents can access information about the programs and make support requests).
- Use MPD data to better inform our community violence prevention efforts. Expand opportunities for data sharing across violence interruption programs and MPD to be more strategic and community-focused.
- Balance our public safety funding to include more robust violence interrupter staffing and community intervention programming.

In the space of public safety and support we have quite a bit of work to do. I am open to revisions to the DC code but would want to convene the right partners and stakeholders to support that process. I believe groups like the DC Justice Lab, Black Swan, violence interruption and returning citizens partners, and others need to be at the table to ensure the right steps are taken to make sure we are not just creating more punitive measures but also thinking about opportunities for prevention, interventions, and ways to invest in our communities as a part of our long-term strategies.

Q4: Eckington residents are concerned about air pollution from the Fort Myer asphalt plant, vehicles on large nearby arterial roads, and the like. How would you approach this and other environmental issues in Ward 5?

Response:

Our city is one of the greenest and environmentally friendly cities in the United States. Our city has more environmentally friendly, new buildings and green spaces than most urban centers. Yet, it is well-known that our Ward 5 neighborhoods benefit the least from this status – the asphalt plant located in Eckington is an example of how we MUST do better and think more critically about the colocation of industrial uses adjacent to residential areas and the impact and harm caused right now and over time.

Ward 5 has always been the location of the majority of our city's industrial land use, which has degraded the quality of the air, limited the access to green spaces, and put the health of some of our residents in jeopardy. Much of this has been due to bad policy and poor regulation, stemming from a time in our city's history of housing segregation and redlining, and continuing over decades with efforts to create business opportunity zones in and near our neighborhoods.

I believe that our city resources to address the issues impacting our community, but we must make sure those resources are directed to the needs of our community by:

- Ensuring local and federal funds are directly allocated to address environmental remedies and modernization of industrial spaces in Ward 5 neighborhoods. This funding must prioritize Ward 5 projects to mitigate industrial and other environmental hazards impacting overly burdened communities;
- Creating priority access for Ward 5 communities to city funding for energy-efficiency and environmental improvement projects;
- A whole-government approach to understanding and correcting our environmental issues is the most effective way of addressing policy, regulations and enforcement for environmental preservation and justice;
- The creation of an environmental justice task force to focus on defining the environmental justice needs specific to our communities and to partner with community members and businesses on how to move our communities forward. There are models in New York and New Jersey we can follow for this process.

Q5: Eckington, Edgewood, and other Ward 5 communities have struggled to secure important amenities that are commonplace in Wards 3 and 6. If elected, are you committed to ensuring that Ward 5 elementary and middle schools are modernized and that a D.C. public library serving Eckington and Edgewood is built?

Response:

As the Ward 5 Councilmember I would absolutely be committed to ensuring our ward continues to grow and develop in ways that are beneficial to our entire community. We have seen massive growth in our community over the last few decades, but the focus now must be on equitable growth and distribution. I believe we must start to proactively plan for how we want our community to develop as other communities, like Ward 3 and 6, have focused on. As councilmember, I would work to convene an advisory group to focus examine the trajectory of our past growth and think about where we want our ward to grow in the next decade. I would also work closely with our community leaders to stay connected the shifts happening within their communities and to continue to assess the individual needs of our community and how it intersects with the needs of the entire ward. I would also want to support the expansion of supports for small local business growth and work to facilitate the resources needed to ensure small local businesses are able to locate and thrive in our communities. Small local businesses often bring amenities that meet the specific needs of our communities, often they are our neighbors, and they bring much needed jobs to our communities. As a community, we must direct and guide how we want our community to grow and expand – we can do it but we must be proactive in our planning, together, and to work together to advocate for greater city investment in our ward. I will be a champion to make sure that investment happens and that our neighbors are a part of the process.