

Candidate: Janeese Lewis George  
Campaign: Committee to Re-Elect Janeese Lewis George  
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## Committee of 100 Candidate Questionnaire - June 2024 Primary

### Planning and Zoning

1. Over the past 15 years the Office of Planning has supported maximum zoning allowances, smaller residential units, and luxury amenities as priorities in revitalizing neighborhoods. Significant displacement of Black residents and businesses has followed. What three changes to planning and zoning would you recommend that will address growth and change while maintaining the culture, history, and demographic of DC's neighborhoods?

**We need to do better with the systems we currently have and better evaluate their efficacy in real time.**

1. For instance, our Inclusionary Zoning program creates many affordable housing units every year, but it's not being administered and monitored in a way that ensures it is meeting its requirements and that it is functional for the people who are supposed to benefit from it.
  2. The same can be said for many of the programs that originate in our planning and zoning agencies. If we were better monitoring and evaluating our existing plans and regulations, we would be able to adjust them to meet the goals identified. Until then, additional changes will result in more of the same.
2. Would you support the creation of an independent Planning Commission? Yes \_\_\_ No X  
Please explain your answer.

While I do believe the Office of Planning is subject to the desires of the Executive, regardless of who the Executive is at any given time, I don't believe the problem is independence. We need better oversight and transparency. Creating yet another independent agency will likely lead to more stagnation. We need our existing systems to work better together.

3. Do you support retaining the current Height Act? Yes \_\_\_ No X

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Please explain your answer.

I do not support eliminating the Height Act altogether. I don't want DC to become New York City. However, I do believe we can amend it to get more density in areas such as Metro stations and others that don't create concrete canyons. We can preserve our skyline and create a city where we meet our housing needs.

### **Downtown**

4. Aside from office to residential conversions, what do you believe are the best solutions to the hollowing out of downtown?

It's too soon to claim downtown is hollowing out. The combination of the global pandemic and flexibility most industries have for remote work is clearly changing downtown, and it will continue to change. Adding housing is helpful, as is incentivizing businesses to establish a base in downtown. We will eventually reach an equilibrium and will build from there. Beyond that, I believe we should move beyond trying to attract businesses like large law, accounting, and consulting firms, and instead focus on businesses that can serve both residents and tourists alike. While we obviously have heavy and light tourist seasons, we should expand our focus on service industry businesses that can operate year round, especially if they are locally owned businesses.

### **Neighborhoods**

5. It is an established fact that Wards 7 and 8 lag behind the other Wards in terms of services and amenities, such as grocery stores, comprehensive health care and restaurants. What do you think can be done to bring real racial and economic equity to these Wards?

The first step is to stop paying lip service to trying to bring additional businesses and services to Wards 7 and 8. For instance, when planning the new hospital, the Council chose to waive the requirements for a study to define the exact needs of the area. While it's obvious that we need a full service hospital east of the river, there was no study about the additional services that are needed. Most hospitals have entire communities of supportive and specialty medical services, restaurants, pharmacies, etc. Waiving the requirements for the study meant we're ignoring the needs of the community, including the need to operate full service, high-risk labor and delivery maternity and NICU wards and level 1 trauma and surgery center. It was a missed opportunity that is unfortunately in keeping with our history.

We also need to focus on building small businesses that can be locally owned. There are people living in Wards 7 and 8 who would love to open a corner store or a restaurant, but we're not focusing on providing the resources to make that achievable. We're focused on chain grocery

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stores and restaurants who are more likely to leave in lean times. We need to invest in the people who are already invested in all of our neighborhoods across The District.

### **Transportation**

6. What can be done to support MetroRail and MetroBus considering the reduced ridership from the pandemic and the potential reduction in federal subsidies? What should the Council do to ensure funding of DC's share of WMATA's costs?

The cost of supporting Metro should be divided equally between the District, Maryland, and Virginia. While there are population differences and variances in ridership, the combination of residents, tourists, and commuters results in a shared benefit and a shared responsibility among all three jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction will likely need to leverage a new tax for a formula or minimum funding amount that ensures the long-term physical and financial health of the Metro system. I would ideally be interested in the District exploring regional funding solutions that lend well to progressive taxation, however, such as a regional property tax increase on very high-value homes or a regional split-rate property tax for land located nearest to metro stations. I am concerned by the current budget proposal to raise DC sales tax to fund metro as sales taxes are disproportionately paid by lower income residents but if sales taxes must be leveraged then there should be a regional agreement to avoid putting DC businesses and residents at any disadvantage.

7. More than 60% of the vehicles on DC streets are commuters from outside the District. Both MARC and VRE are planning significant increases in commuter rail traffic coming into and through DC, which should reduce the number of commuters driving into the District. For example, Virginia is investing about \$2 billion to construct a second Potomac River rail bridge and expand the L'Enfant VRE Commuter Rail Station. Should DC more actively support the development of commuter rail? Yes \_\_\_ No  X  If your answer is yes, what steps should DC take?

8. Should the existing 2.5-mile streetcar line on H Street NE continue in operation, or be dismantled and replaced with buses? Yes  x  No \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain your answer.

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DC needs a reliable, robust public transportation system. The Streetcar does not transport as many riders as the buses do and it uses valuable resources. I'd like to learn more about the ROI and the cost benefit analysis that has been done to justify it remaining.

9. The installation of bike lanes around the city has resulted in strong opposition. Different stakeholders say their interests have been ignored and they are now less safe and less welcome in these areas. What are your views? Are you aware of any data that show that bike lanes have resulted in increased bicycle use and safety? Do you think an evaluation of newly installed bicycle lanes should be conducted (considering such factors as increases in bike ridership; rider, pedestrian, car safety; reduced traffic, etc.) before there is any expansion?

The District can and should be a multi-modal transportation city – as all world class cities are. Given the number of bikers we have in the District, it is our responsibility to find a way for both bikers and drivers to co-exist safely. That also applies to pedestrians, bus riders, and Metro riders. We can all co-exist and it is our responsibility to find a way to make that happen safely.

### **Historic Preservation**

10. Historic preservation is a hallmark of DC's development history. Do you have any concerns about protecting the integrity of landmarks and historic districts as the city continues to grow?

Please explain.

The current protections are strong enough to ensure the integrity of our historic city remains protected without limiting our ability to grow.

### **Affordable Housing**

11. What tools and investments are needed to maintain housing affordability or increase affordable housing opportunities throughout the city?

While we can always increase our investments to things like the Housing Production Trust Fund and our Local Rent Supplement Voucher program, I'm not convinced that is the only thing that is needed. We need to pay much closer attention to the way we are allocating our current funds. The underwriting and allocation processes for the Department of Housing and Community Development and DC Housing Finance Corporation are not at all transparent and

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warrant our scrutiny. I do not have confidence that we are maximizing our public dollars and bond authority for the creation of affordable housing. We have *never* met the income targeting that DC law requires of the HPTF. That's unacceptable. **Again, I support increasing funding, but we must have a higher level of confidence that we are spending our current allocations well.**

12. Whom do you think DC's rent control regulation DC benefits? Would you support expanding the program to multi-family buildings built before 2005?

DC's rent control law benefits a wide variety of residents ranging from lower income families to young adults with good incomes but a lot of student loan debt to seniors who have lived in the same rent control apartments for decades. I believe rent control isn't about affordability but is instead about predictability and that is just as important as affordability to many of our residents. The current arbitrary building age is harmful and should be adjusted. I do not support establishing another arbitrary date such as anything built before 2005, but instead support establishing a building age such as bringing a building under rent control 20 years after its placed-in-service date. I am open to hearing from and learning more alongside experts when setting the building age, but strongly believe the building qualification needs to be updated.

13. Interest has been expressed by the Council in eliminating single-family zoning as one way to address the shortage of affordable housing. What is your thinking on this strategy, and on what data do you base your conclusion?

We need to maximize the creation of any new housing in the District, but that doesn't necessarily mean completely eliminating any one type of housing. I don't have a specific data source to back up my opinions on this matter, but I'm not sure one is needed to know that there will always be single-family housing in the District. I support evaluating our zoning codes regularly to adjust as neighborhoods change or need to change. Completely eliminating any specific type of housing severely limits our ability to adjust based on our population and its needs.

### **RFK Stadium Site**

14. If the District acquires the RFK Stadium property, for what purposes would you want it used?

The District should acquire and redevelop this property to create both new housing, commercial space, and recreational areas for District residents. This is one of the last large tracts of land available for thoughtful and well-planned development. We will be making a

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huge mistake that will do long-term damage if we do not maximize the opportunity for housing, including social housing options, first and foremost.

15. Do you support the District subsidizing a new football stadium in the District for the Washington Commanders? Yes \_\_\_ No X\_\_\_

Please respond to [Chair@Committeeof100.net](mailto:Chair@Committeeof100.net)