1. DC has a deep-seated problem with income and wealth inequality that falls along racial lines. Median income in Ward 8 is $39K versus $143K in Ward 3. Worst of all, there has been no significant progress in reducing inequality, and the growing wealth of the city is concentrated increasingly at the top. Is this a serious problem in your view, and if so, what is your most transformative proposal to deal with it?

From day one on the job as Mayor, I have focused on creating pathways to the middle class. We are a prosperous and growing city, but there is more work to do to ensure all Washingtonians are benefitting from our city’s prosperity. To build on our progress, I have focused on bringing jobs and opportunity to every neighborhood, creating affordable housing, supporting small and local businesses, diversifying our economy, and connecting more DC residents to DC-sustaining careers, as well as transforming income supports in our Department of Human Services (DHS). Here are a few achievements:

- Championed a wide range of family-friendly policies, including raising the minimum wage to $15/hour, adding more than 1,000 new childcare seats and implementing a childcare tax credit, and transforming benefits programs like DHS’s DC Flex to curb the benefits cliff residents face when gaining employment.
- Created the DC Infrastructure Academy to train DC residents for high-paying jobs with DC utilities companies, Solar Works DC and green infrastructure projects.
- Tripled our government procurement spend with District-based small businesses since 2015. Last year, for the very first time in District history, we spent more than $1 billion with DC small businesses.
- Expanded the Mayor Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program to serve residents up to age 24; Expanded MPD Police Cadet Corps for DC High School graduates.
- Celebrated the groundbreaking at MLK Gateway, a renovation that will bring office, retail, and other neighborhood amenities to Ward 8.
- Set a bold goal to deliver an additional 36,000 units of housing – including at least 12,000 units of affordable housing – by 2025. By equitably distributing these goals across the District’s ten planning areas, we made DC the first jurisdiction in the nation to create affordable housing goals by neighborhood.
- At St. Elizabeths, funded the development of a brand-new Hospital in Ward 8 and announced that Whitman-Walker Health will build a state-of-the-art health center to provide critical healthcare services East of the Anacostia River.
I will keep pushing to make the District a leader for inclusive prosperity.

2. DC residents of all races and ages share the view that the DC government needs to work better, and frustration with agencies and programs that are often ineffective and unresponsive, has only grown during the pandemic. Reforming DC government agencies is a long-term endeavor and one in which Mayors have struggled to succeed. Which three government agencies would you prioritize for reform in your next term, and how would those reforms benefit the lives of working families?

I am proud of the 35,000+ DC government employees. I consider them to be among the finest public servants in the country. They are creative, resilient, brave, empathetic, intelligent, caring, and diligent. Their jobs are challenging but time and again they rise to meet that challenge. During the pandemic, they turned on a dime to continue to provide services of the highest quality to DC residents, including in-person services provided by DC Public Schools teachers and staff who were the first in the region to return to in-person learning; DOES staff who issued over $2 billion in unemployment benefits in a historic crush of claims; DC Public Works leaders and staff who never failed in citywide trash services, and DC Health employees who stood up the gold standard in testing and vaccination programs, while helping us bend the curve and save lives. In many cases, they had to do more under trying conditions. Here are a few of their achievements:

- Closed DC General and reduced family homelessness by 73%
- Issued over $300 million in rental relief for STAY DC, among the fastest distribution of relief in the country
- Invested one billion dollars in affordable housing to keep Washingtonians in Washington
- On January 6th, our first responders protected lawmakers, defended our Capitol and our Democracy
- Invested over $200 million in childcare facilities
- Contracted with Small Business Enterprises for over $1.13 billion
- Completed the largest infrastructure final arches of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge

In these unprecedented times, we have moved our city together, and despite all that we have faced, our DC government employees and the agencies where they work have given more Washingtonians a fair shot.
There is, of course, always opportunities for efficiency improvements and to learn from what worked during the pandemic:

- Create more by-appointment services and virtual services;
- Elevate our use of technology to mirror private sector customer experience, including the current project to replace the unemployment insurance system.
- Streamline procurements: COVID procurements allowed us to acquire life-saving goods and services with speed, transparency, and equity.
- Train more DC residents to fill DC government jobs: DC Contact Tracing, COVID vaccine outreach teams, and violence interrupters allowed us to serve a critical need while providing much needed professional experience for residents.
- Focus on resiliency: respond to shifted, post-COVID daily routines, re-examining how we use public space, how we make streets safer, where we need housing, and how to bring back our hospitality and creative economies.

3. Recently, several failures in the handling of programs intended to increase the amount of affordable, and especially deeply affordable, housing in the District have come to light. If elected, what goals would you establish for creating deeply affordable housing in all wards of the city and how would you hold your administration accountable for meeting those goals?

Over the past two decades, our population has skyrocketed and so have our housing prices. Back in 1960, when my parents bought their home in North Michigan Park, the average home in DC cost about $15,000. Today, the median home price is about $700,000. When housing is out of reach for middle-class families, we lose them to the suburbs, and we lose our identity. If we are going to remain a city that is diverse, vibrant and healthy, we must protect the longtime, middle-class families we have, and welcome new ones.

This summer, I announced a $400 million subsidy for affordable housing, the largest ever of its kind. Since taking office, we’ve invested more than a billion dollars in the Housing Production Trust Fund. And, since 2019, we made progress toward my goal of delivering 36,000 new homes – including at least 12,000 affordable homes – by 2025. We have delivered over 14,250 units of affordable housing and there are another 12,300 in the pipeline or under construction. We are making strides, but we still have a way to go. And we can’t afford to slow the momentum.

My commitment for the next four years is to continue to invest even more resources in affordable housing.
4. The DC Housing Authority board of commissioners continues to suffer from scandal and dysfunction, and the people who are most harmed by the dysfunction are public housing residents. What are your plans to create a better DCHA board?

I’m proud to have created the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability, and I’m even prouder that the standards embodied in the companion Code of Conduct holds all officials accountable. The ethical lapse of one board member cannot stop the progress of this very important agency. The District cannot afford to lose one unit of public housing to neglect, dysfunction or politics. That is why I am proud to have recently recommended that Brenda Donald serve as the Executive Director of the DC Housing Authority. Brenda has enjoyed a remarkable career running and improving governmental agencies, especially those that work with vulnerable populations. DCHA is more than a real estate organization, it’s also one that serves DC residents who are working toward changing their families’ economic trajectories. Finally, connecting DCHA effectively to the services of all of DC government is a game changer. Director Donald is a proven leader and I have every confidence in her. But she can’t do it without resources. So, I am proud to have invested $124 million to the Local Rent Supplement program to connect even more DC residents to affordable housing.

5. There is a highly charged debate about community safety. Some say the answer is to invest in more police. Others say we should address the root causes of violence by investing in housing, education and basic needs, as well as alternative approaches, such as violence interruption services. What policies or budget changes will you prioritize for the safety of DC residents?

As long as I am Mayor, the police will be fully funded and fully accountable. Public safety is more than a job for the police, however. It involves all of the government and the community. In addition to advancing budgets that fully fund MPD needs, I made an historic $59 million investment in alternatives to law enforcement that, overtime, should have positive public safety impacts. I will recruit cadets so there is a pipeline of talent. I will get illegal guns off the street and interrupt crime before it happens. And I will push the Justice Department and federal judges for faster prosecution and accountability for violent offenders.

6. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is becoming more popular as a solution to the problem of candidates being elected with less than majority support. RCV is effective in cities and states across the country, and has proven an effective
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tool for strengthening our democracy. Councilmember Christina Henderson has introduced an RCV bill (the VOICE Act) that has been gaining momentum. Do you plan to support the bill? If not, what are your concerns about the bill and can the bill be changed to address them?

Our democracy is better when more citizens participate in elections. I support the goal of increasing voter participation. That is why I am participating in the District’s Fair Elections Program. The Fair Elections Program incentivizes candidates to seek out many supporters, not just a few large donors, and amplifies the voices of more Washingtonians, including those from diverse backgrounds. Ranked Choice Voting similarly raises the potential to increase participation in our elections. However, as the DC Democratic State Committee testified during a hearing on the bill, ranked-choice voting could potentially create voter confusion. Members of the Democratic party also testified that the legislation is not equitable and could lead to voter suppression. I don’t think the bill has gained momentum. In fact, I think it is stalled at the Council. At this time, I do not support this change to our elections process.

7. Most Washingtonians believe that "taxation without representation" is immoral. Yet “permanent residents” who make their homes in DC and pay the same taxes as citizens but do not have the right to vote. Ward 1 Councilmember Brianne Nadeau has introduced the Local Resident Voting Rights Act to grant those members of our community voting rights in local DC elections, such as Mayor, Council, School Board, and ANC. Do you support this bill?

I support granting DC residents who are not U.S. citizens but are legal permanent residents voting rights for local municipal elections. In fact, I introduced a version of this bill when I was a councilmember.

Since taking office as Mayor of my hometown, I have steadfastly advocated for the District to become the 51st state. I’ve testified before Congress twice and we have gotten a statehood bill closer to becoming law than ever before. My testimony each time has been blunt: our Congresswoman doesn’t have a final vote, and we do not have two senators to speak for us in matters of war and peace and in matters about the Supreme Court. Without statehood, our voices are silenced. Denying District residents a say on federal issues is akin to denying permanent residents a vote in local elections. That is anti-democratic, and it’s un-American.
8. The revolving door between the Wilson building and corporate lobbying is a major source of corruption. If you are reelected as Mayor, will you commit to NOT work as a corporate lobbyist doing business with the DC government for at least 4 years after you leave office, and will you ask for the same commitment from your deputy mayors and other top appointees?

I authored and passed the District’s ethics reform law in 2011. That law instituted numerous reforms that created one of the best ethics regimes in the country according to experts. It set forth real accountability and transparency on matters of post-employment restrictions, financial conflicts of interest, gifts, restrictions on political activity, and more. It also created the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability, which has routinely and appropriately punished unethical behavior, and to which I have referred incidences of unethical behavior for review and adjudication. DC for Democracy, to the extent it is aware of incidences of same, should do likewise; maintaining an ethical government requires us all to be vigilant.

While I’ve made no decisions about my post-mayor life, I can assure you that I will seek opportunities that amplify my two decades-long commitment to serving DC residents and making them proud, supporting my family, and growing my impact on the nation and the world, and of course, meeting all legal post-employment standards.

9. How do you envision the newly formed Executive Office of Racial Equity functioning to ensure that city policies and actions both do NO harm to members of Black and brown communities AND increase racial equity in all wards of the city?

On the first day of Black History Month this year, I announced the establishment of the Office of Racial Equity. The Office of Racial Equity focuses on developing an infrastructure to ensure policy decisions and District programs are evaluated through an equity lens. To put it plainly, the Office was established to do exactly what your questions contemplates: ensure that city policies and actions both do NO harm to members of Black and brown communities AND increase racial equity in all wards of the city. Less than a year from its establishment, the Office is hard at work focusing on developing an infrastructure to ensure policy decisions and District programs are evaluated through an equity lens.

I am also proud to report that we hired a wonderful director for the Office. Amber Hewitt, formerly the director of health equity at Families USA, a national organization that pushes for high-quality, affordable health care, is our first Chief Equity Officer. Amber has been hard at
work collaborating with District agencies, residents, and external stakeholders to make meaningful progress toward a more equitable city.

But, increasing racial equity isn’t the role of just one office; it must be part of everything we do. Here are just a few examples:

- We launched “EquityRFP,” an initiative to enhance equity in the District’s development projects. Through this initiative, the District will include an equity inclusion prioritization in forthcoming RFP’s that will increase access to development opportunities for entities or organizations that are owned or majority-controlled by individuals determined to be part of a socially disadvantaged population.
- In 2019, my administration launched ResilientDC. A key focus area in this plan was Equity in Governance, a priority now reflected in District programs and services. ResilientDC initiated a comprehensive review of the District’s equity portfolio and put into motion the first of many equity-focused evaluations of agency programs and services.
- The Lab @ DC hosted a week-long workshop series focused on reimaging police stops where participants from law enforcement, advocate organizations, researchers and residents challenged what creates an equitable experience with the police.
- Throughout the District’s Public Health Emergency, the Bowser Administration has closely monitored residents’ needs to ensure a robust and equitable response and recovery.

The pandemic has amplified the need to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable, and we are profoundly aware of DC’s deep racial disparities. We will continue to address these historic inequities to enable all residents to have access to affordable housing, convenient and healthy communities, healthy food, local business, retail options, and great community facilities. If given the opportunity to serve another term as mayor, my administration will keep pushing until all DC residents are prospering.