

*Robert Bushard failed to fill out our questionnaire. To inform voters as best we can, MNYC brought in relevant information from candidates' websites when possible*

- 1. If elected, will you work to remove the affordable housing exemption in our city's Rent Stabilization Ordinance? If NO, why? If YES, how?**
  - Robert Bushard: does not have this answer on website.
  - **Mitra Jalali:** Yes. I voted against this ordinance change and remain extremely concerned about it. I represent many constituents in LIHTC and subsidized buildings who are experiencing both rent hikes and other property management issues; they deserve both strong rent stabilization and more support from the City in general to address the issues they're experiencing in their buildings. I think there is nuance in the policy details about how to make sure we can build and finance new affordable housing while supporting renters living in current LIHTC/subsidized buildings, but/and we can and should address that in the "new construction" section of the rent stabilization policy. There are renters living in currently constructed subsidized housing, whether it was built two years ago or twelve years ago, who have lost rent stabilization protections, and we need to restore that.
- 2. If elected, would you work to reduce the length of the new construction exemption; remove its retroactive application; and ensure it no longer applies to subsidized affordable housing? If NO, why? If YES, how?**
  - RB: does not have this answer on website.
  - **MJ:** I have already worked to do this - I brought an amendment during the ordinance process that was a shorter new construction exemption (15 years, not current 20), removed the retroactive application so that people in recently built housing still have rent stabilization, and opposed the subsidized affordable housing exemption. This was based on a comprehensive task force process that recommended most of these changes, and while that recommendation was disregarded, I worked hard to uphold it. Going forward, I believe we first need a comprehensive public policy evaluation to understand whether and/or how rent stabilization has impacted new construction and development in Saint Paul, as well as how it's working for current renters who need those protections. We should then consider any future policy decisions based on that empirical data, the same way we would any other policy. I am troubled by what feels like an anecdotal policy conversation about rent stabilization's impacts in our city, when what our community deserves is a comprehensive evaluation and identified areas for improvement. Additionally, we should not consider exemptions to rent stabilization without being able to say as a city what protections renters in those buildings will get instead of rent stabilization.
- 3. What is your perspective on the enforcement of our city's Rent Stabilization Ordinance? What are your ideas for how it could be improved?**
  - RB: does not have this answer on his website.

- **MJ:** Our city is not adequately enforcing the hard-fought Rent Stabilization Ordinance. As a returning Councilmember I will work to significantly increase the enforcement budget so that renters have actual recourse besides just turning to a lawyer if they have experienced a violation of RS from their landlord. We also need funding for community education and enforcement of the policy, the same way we did as best practices for minimum wage ordinance and other wide-reaching policies. We should also eliminate the self-certification process and clean up the rules that the DSI (Department of Safety and Inspections) passed that essentially set it up to favor landlords. I view this as a major project of the future Council and am running for re-election to be a thoughtful, knowledgeable leader who can improve enforcement of rent stabilization for all who need it.
- 4. The City of St. Paul has long discussed the need for administrative citations as a tool to ensure compliance with city ordinances such as Minimum Wage; Earned Sick and Safe Time; and now, our Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Do you support the implementation of administrative citations in our city? Why or why not?**
- **RB:** does not have this answer on website.
  - **MJ:** I strongly support administrative citations. We need this as an additional tool to hold negligent landlords accountable, enforce minimum wage law against businesses skirting the rules and uphold rent stabilization. I will work very hard with our future Council to pass the 7-0 Charter change required to unlock administrative citations as an ordinance for better managing our racial equity policies in Saint Paul.
- 5. This election, St. Paul voters get to decide if we will increase our city's sales tax by 1% over the next 20 years in order to make an unprecedented investment in our roads and parks. Will you be voting in favor of or against this proposal in November? Why? If you will not vote in favor, what are your ideas for how we can improve the city's roads and parks?**
- **RB (from his website):** I will support single family homeownership, crime prevention, lower taxes, limit spending, limit rezoning and work to eliminate RCV in our elections.
  - **MJ:** I am in full support of the sales tax measure. It is an essential way for our city to raise the revenue necessary to provide the equitable city services that our residents deserve, and to raise millions in public funds we can re-invest into our streets and parks for public benefit.
- 6. More than ever before, people are grappling with isolation and loneliness. How will you use your role to foster connection and a sense of place in St. Paul? How do you plan to protect and invest in public spaces?**
- **RB:** does not have this answer on website.
  - **MJ:** We can combat loneliness and isolation through more vibrant public spaces, from our parks to our libraries and more. I will continue to prioritize maintenance, accessibility, and green areas, with inclusivity features that

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accommodate diverse needs. We also need to increase efforts to collaborate with artists for more public art and installations, providing visually appealing landmarks that spark community engagement and connection. In my Ward, I have championed the rebuilding of the Hamline-Midway Library to be more accessible and welcoming, helped bring new city parks to the ward like Westgate which serves a heavily renter/BIPOC diverse new neighborhood in South Saint Anthony Park, and helped launch the ChromaZone Mural Festival which brings public art to the neighborhood annually through a diverse group of muralists focused on racial equity and placemaking. I will continue to advocate for public spaces as well as other community events like supporting cultural festivals and markets. Through uniting local government with businesses and institutions in our neighborhoods, we can be a community where connections flourish and individuals thrive.

### **7. If elected, what would your approach to public safety look like?**

- **RB (from website):** Robert Bushard endorses Dr. Jensen's 10 point plan to curb crime. The 10-point plan focuses on the following areas:
  - i. Make carjacking its own crime with much harsher penalties
  - ii. Stop non-profit funding to bail out criminals
  - iii. Bring in the State Patrol to reinstate order
  - iv. Stiffen penalties for repeat offenders
  - v. Screen and appoint judges who will uphold sentences
  - vi. Create statutes to ensure judges cannot deviate from sentencing guidelines
  - vii. Create a division within our Department of Public Safety to protect children from sex traffickers
  - ix. Coordinate a restorative justice program, so offenders can participate in cleaning up their communities
  - x. End recidivism with productive training and skill building
  - xi. Utilize the National Guard immediately upon need and activate them preemptively to restore order
- **MJ:** My focus is on prioritizing proactive investments in our community that reduce crime, instability and keep people safe without having to react or resort to traditional law enforcement. True community safety prioritizes people's well-being and funds their futures. It's essential that safety encompasses everyone, irrespective of identity or location. For over four years, I've advocated for a community-centered public safety approach in St. Paul. This approach includes having more well-trained, accountable, and compassionate first responders who address diverse needs beyond traditional policing. By proactively funding community needs, we create stability and reduce the desperation that can lead to violence in the first place. One significant achievement to this end is the establishment of our new community safety system. This includes specialized responders for mental health crises and

community leaders offering support to youth. The newly formed Office of Neighborhood Safety, guided by a community commission, enhances transparency and accountability. We must break the cycle of senseless violence, particularly against our Black and indigenous neighbors. Upholding accountability and redefining safety to prioritize those at risk from unjust practices forms the bedrock of change at the center to my holistic approach to public safety.

8. **This summer, the Twin Cities has experienced record levels of poor air quality. We know that St. Paul has the opportunity — and the responsibility — to be a leader on climate change solutions across our state. How will you show up to make St. Paul a carbon-neutral city by 2050, per our Climate Action & Resilience Plan?**
  - RB: does not have this answer on website.
  - MJ: I recognize the urgent need to combat climate change and its impacts on our community. I firmly believe that expanding public transit is a crucial step toward achieving a more sustainable future for our city. By investing in public transit, we can reduce the reliance on individual cars, decrease traffic congestion, and significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions. This not only improves air quality but also contributes to a more livable urban environment. I'm committed to further expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure across Saint Paul. A safer Summit Avenue master plan is crucial for all biking, walking, rolling, and running activities. To accomplish this, I am committed to collaborating with state and federal programs that support sustainable transportation initiatives. State and federal programs offer valuable resources and funding opportunities to help us expand and enhance our public transit infrastructure. By leveraging these programs, we can secure the necessary financial backing to invest in new transit routes, upgrade existing ones, and incorporate cleaner and more energy-efficient technologies into our transit systems. By doing so, we can reduce emissions, improve air quality, and create a more sustainable and resilient city for generations to come.
9. **Creating opportunities for St. Paulites to choose between different modes of transportation is critical for a more sustainable future. How will you invest in our public transportation system?**
  - RB: does not have this answer on website.
  - MJ: I am fully dedicated to investing in public transit in St. Paul as a vital step towards addressing climate change and creating a more sustainable future. Expanding public transit is essential for reducing car dependency, alleviating traffic congestion, and substantially lowering greenhouse gas emissions. By investing in public transit, we enhance air quality and foster a more livable urban environment. I currently serve on the Met Council Transportation Advisory Board and will be directly shaping how our community spends millions in a forthcoming regional metro sales tax for transportation and transit as approved by the Legislature in 2023. I am excited to bring the perspectives of

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young people and transit users to this regional conversation. I will also continue closely working with our state and federal delegation to increase funding for and quality of public transit. This commitment will result in reduced emissions, improved air quality, and the creation of a more sustainable and resilient city for the benefit of current and future generations.

**10. We know that local governments — including the City of St. Paul — need increased revenue to meet the needs of residents. What ways will you explore generating revenue so that we have the resources we need to build a city that works for all of us?**

- RB: does not have this answer on website.
- MJ: First, I am in favor of the proposal to increase our city's sales tax by 1% over the next 20 years to make a groundbreaking investment in our roads and parks. This proposal will help ensure that everyone who uses our regional systems pays into the costs of maintaining them. Second, we need to embrace major redevelopment opportunities citywide for community benefits and expansion of the tax base. I am actively involved in shaping the Allianz Field superblock site, and as a CM have worked on other sites like Highland Bridge, Hillcrest/The Heights and the forthcoming Sears Site as opportunities to transform vacant spaces into housing, jobs and local business and office space for more community use. I am also in favor of exploring the creation of a citywide parking fee policy similar to other cities, such as the City of Portland. A 20-cent fee added to metered parking transactions can raise revenues that pay for other city needs like street maintenance and affordable housing. Metered parking on key commercial corridors like Grand Ave and other streets can help raise millions of dollars annually for targeted needs citywide.

**11. Local government is often the place where people can feel the impact of policy decisions, as well as their own power. How will you use your platform and power to build a more participatory, multiracial democracy in our majority BIPOC city?**

- RB: does not have this answer on his website.
- MJ: I will use my platform to elevate and visibilize people who are underrepresented in local government, including young people, renters, BIPOC and people newer to our city. As a returning CM I will continue hosting inclusive events, open dialogues and community forums, specifically focusing on the perspectives and experiences of BIPOC and other underrepresented residents. I am interested in exploring how participatory budgeting could work in Saint Paul and other such process reforms that would help people have a more direct connection to what happens at City Hall. I would be excited to work with MNYC to have a more participatory and multiracial democracy in our Saint Paul.

**12. We believe in working in strong partnership with allied councilmembers. How will you relate to the Minnesota Youth Collective so that we can govern and strategize together, to make progress toward a shared agenda?**

- RB: does not have this answer on website.

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- **MJ:** I am proud to be “Minnesota Youth Collective’s Councilmember” as I represent the Ward of Saint Paul where the organization is located. I also have numerous connections to MNYC through its past and present staff and members as a natural part of my work and relationships in the community. I would like a two-way, deep and human relationship where we have regular open communication channels, strategize together, define success together through rapidly evolving situations and are fighting for the same things in partnership. Co-governing is a complex and essential skill for movements to succeed over time. I want to keep doing this work with MNYC toward our shared agenda.

**13. Young people need ferocious, risk-taking champions to build the futures they deserve. Tell us about a time in your public leadership when you took a risk. What was the risk? How did it go?**

- **RB:** does not have this answer on website.
- **MJ:** There was a time where openly supporting a public safety vision that shifted away from just traditional police and more toward community-centered programs and services was perceived as a political risk, and in many places it still is, but I always saw it as a moral imperative. It is a moral imperative because we simply must stop the cycle of senseless killings of our Black neighbors at the hands of police. Understanding the need for risk taking champions in Saint Paul, one of my proudest accomplishments on the council was leading the creation of our new community safety system, in close partnership with Mayor Carter and the community. This system expands our emergency responses and takes care of people where they are. As a result, we now have a team of first responders that meet people in mental health crises without any law enforcement– something unprecedented in our city. We now have a team of community leaders through the Parks and Rec department that create positive street presence and a familiar face to youth in need. And we have, for the first time ever, an Office of Neighborhood Safety that gives these programs, and others, a home while dedicating outstanding staff to this work. I believe things won’t change unless we are willing to name what isn’t working and what we need to be doing instead. I am grateful to MN Youth Collective for putting the perspectives of young people at the center of our work, so that we can think about the future with our emerging leaders in mind.