

David Greenwood Sanchez, Nate Nins and Pam Tollefson 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?

- Hwa Jeong Kim: Yes. I worked in affordable housing for the first part of my professional career. I have strong partnerships that I will rely on to ensure a collaborative process with current affordable housing builders, providers, city attorneys, and renters of affordable housing units.
- David Greenwood Sanchez: does not have this answer on website.
- Nate Nins: does not have this answer on website.
- Pam Tollefson: does not have this answer on website.

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?

- HJK: Yes, to all three. We are a majority renter city and the majority of renters in Saint Paul are people of color. The average age of our entire housing stock is 70 years old, with 57% of the housing stock, single and multiplex, we have today built before 1940. This means the quality of housing we allow most of our residents to access is less energy efficient, may need significant updating, and may not meet the needs of multigenerational families. The city's Comprehensive Plan focuses on transit-connected development, but the look-back period also exempts housing development along the Green Line, which finished in 2014. It should be no surprise that many large-scale (100+ units) developments are along transit lines. I signed the ballot initiative and voted yes to adopt a residential rent stabilization ordinance in Saint Paul. Saint Paul voters passed a 3% rent stabilization ordinance. Safe, stable, and affordable housing is a human right. The kinds of funds or financing used to construct the building or how long ago it was built should not determine a person's right to stable housing. I will work with city attorneys, housing advocates, developers of all sizes, and our incoming council to revisit the exemptions.
- DGS: does not have this answer on website.
- NN: does not have this answer on website.
- PT: does not have this answer on website.

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?

- HJK: We must invest in investigators, widespread education, and strong enforcement through our Department of Safety and Inspections.
- DGS (from website): The city is suffering from a housing shortage, and this is making it difficult for people to contemplate homeownership, and often simply to pay the rent. Unfortunately, St. Paul has pushed the mantra that "all

development is good development,” a doctrine resulting, primarily, in the widespread construction of \$1500/month condos across the city. Let’s be clear – this is not affordable housing. Rather than continue to wait for the benefits of these condos to trickle down to regular people, we need to proactively work alongside developers to find new solutions focused on real affordability via new construction, new multi-plex options, the repurposing of historic buildings, tiny homes, and office conversions.

- **NN (from website):** A place to call Home, and the ability to reasonably afford it, is something everyone wants. I have faced the decision to pay for rent or food and have been housing unstable, so I deeply understand the need to facilitate an affordable home for all St. Paulites. I will work to make easier to access emergency, short-term, and long-term housing. Partner with the City, businesses, and education institutions to find creative housing options, and Foster a one-stop community service model.
 - **PT (from website):** Access to safe, affordable housing is essential to the health and well-being of our community. I will work to increase the supply of affordable housing options, by looking at public-private partnerships, inclusionary zoning; preserving existing affordable housing; and, government support providing financial incentives, tax credits and other resources.
- 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?**
- **HJK:** Yes, AND it takes 7-0 vote. Additionally, the law I was proud to lead in writing and passage was Banning Conversion Therapy in Saint Paul. It also needs administrative fines. I have also heard about the inability to enforce prevailing wages from our labor partners. We need enforcement to ensure the good things we pass are implemented with integrity.
 - **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
 - **NN:** does not have this answer on website.
 - **PT:** does not have this answer on website.
- 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?**
- **HJK:** I will be supporting the sales tax. Saint Paul has finite resources to pay for our services and infrastructure, and the largest limited revenue source is our taxpayers. With major attractions that draw folks to the capital across the state, a sales tax will allow us to share the cost of the necessary construction with the patrons who come to town to dine out, attend a conference, or go to a game. Besides relying solely on Saint Paul taxpayers, the sales tax is one

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

revenue-generating option we need to be able to utilize to pay for the deferred maintenance of our streets. The state/city has authority over three forms of taxing: sales tax, property taxes, and income tax. Sales tax and property taxes are regressive forms of taxing. I would like to work with the MN Youth Collective to start the conversation around moving the State Legislature to allow Saint Paul to have an income tax.

- **DGS (from website):** One of the biggest myths making its way around St. Paul is the idea that we can only fix our roads if we approve a new 1 percent sales tax. This will be on the ballot on Nov 7th, and the mayor and city council president are encouraging us to get onboard and vote this in (after having already scheduled a 15 percent property tax increase for 2023). I will be very clear in my position: I oppose the sales tax increase. It is bad policy – it is a regressive tax that disproportionately hurts our most vulnerable residents. It is also bad for our businesses because it encourages people to go to other cities to do their shopping. Instead of resorting to a harmful sales tax increase – one that will leave us with a total sales tax of 9.875 percent – our city leaders should ask: how can we balance our budget responsibly? How can we fill the vacant lots downtown? How can we generate new business opportunities and a sustainable revenue base? There are other ways to generate revenue, promote strong public services, and fix our roads without hurting those who are already struggling to make it. But the city’s overreliance on tax increases is only serving to damage the progressive vision in St. Paul, and to put the hurt on working class families and individuals. On Nov 7, I encourage you to vote NO to the sales tax, and to vote YES to a more responsible balancing of the budget. Expanding the tax base needs to be a top priority for the council and the mayor. Here it is vital that we first address the wider context – that without addressing the tax base, the city is resorting to continued property tax hikes, which are hurting everyone. It is in our interest to find a stable and sustainable solution. To expand the tax base, the city should adopt a more delicate use of TIF (tax increment financing). While TIF has been helpful to attract some developments, we also must recognize that it has also pushed out tax revenue generation decades into the future – it diverts property taxes that would otherwise be used as city revenue, and allocates them into the investment project. This can be a useful policy tool for attracting investment, but it is not the only one. Our city leaders have relied excessively on TIF as a means of attracting development; we now have over 75 TIF districts, all of which push out property tax revenue for 8 to 25 years, depleting the tax base. For the fiscal health of our city, we need to become less dependent on TIF, and begin to explore other policy strategies that allow us to generate more immediate revenue. I will also work to find ways to transform the downtown into a more prosperous area for business, and a more stable source of revenue. Currently, the downtown suffers from a problem of image/perception – people generally don’t perceive it as the place where you want to go unless you need to.

Unfortunately, neither TIF nor other commercial development strategies do much to solve this problem (and we have a few decades of evidence to support this). Instead, we need visionary leadership – coalitions of community leaders, business leaders, and political leaders who can craft and articulate a new vision for the downtown. Filling the vacant lots and transforming the downtown into an attractive space for business and people needs to be a top priority for our city.

- **NN**: does not have this answer on website.
- **PT**: does not have this answer on website.

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?

- **HJK**: Our relationship with public space creates belonging. While I served as the Legislative Aide in the Ward 5 office, I worked on the North End Community Center. We recently had the Raise the Roof celebration and reunited with many community members, children, and city employees who helped make this a reality. This center is crucial as it will provide much-needed resources and programs and build a sense of identity. Investing and protecting public spaces allows us to have intergenerational and multicultural relationships. The strength of those relationships connects mental health, physical health, and emotional well-being. I will continue to advocate and support current spaces like our parks and libraries and work on creating belonging through projects like the North End Community Center.
- **DGS**: does not have this answer on website.
- **NN**: does not have this answer on website.
- **PT (from website)**: I believe that our city's historical landmarks are an important part of our shared cultural heritage and deserve to be protected and preserved for future generations. These landmarks represent our city's history, culture, and identity, and they are an important reminder of the sacrifices, struggles, and triumphs that have shaped our community.

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

- **HJK**: No single profession can do it all. Our most significant crime deterrent is investing in people through resourced programs that ensure everyone in Saint Paul has their basic needs met. We must at least invest equally in stabilizing communities with housing programs across the spectrum of needs, culturally relevant addiction services, expanded mental health resources, and providing more youth and adult employment opportunities with access to healthcare. We also need accountability on all levels. People must be accountable when they cause harm, police when they use excessive force, and elected officials must be responsible to taxpayers and voters when our current solutions aren't working or are causing harm to our communities. We know that well-resourced

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

communities experience less desperation. I will intentionally invest in a culture and a community of care.

- **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
- **NN (from website):** As a Marine Corps and MN Army Guard veteran, I understand the stakes involved with safety. The folks of Ward 5 deserve to feel safe in their home and community. To achieve that, we need to support our existing Public Safety staff and also find more opportunities to reduce the potential for crime from the beginning. I will work to expand existing resources,
 - i. Re-establish Neighborhood Youth Corps,
 - ii. Support Appropriate Response Initiative, and
 - iii. Establish a pipeline for active community members to become Peace Officers.
- **PT (from website):** I believe that a strong and effective police force is essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. Our police officers are dedicated public servants who work tirelessly to protect our neighborhoods, prevent crime, and uphold the law. I will prioritize public safety and work to ensure that our police department has the resources and support they need to do their job effectively. This means investing in training and professional development for our officers, as well as providing them with the latest equipment and technology to keep our community safe. I also believe in promoting accountability and transparency within our police department. I will work to strengthen community-police relations, and ensure that our officers are held to the highest standards of professionalism and ethical behavior. The Saint Paul Fire Department protects the life and property of the people of Saint Paul. They are an all hazard response agency comprised of firefighters, paramedics, and EMTs. I will work to ensure that our fire department has the resources and support they need to do their job effectively. This means investing in training and professional development for our firefighters, paramedics and EMTs, as well as providing them with the latest equipment and technology to respond to emergencies quickly and safely. I also believe in promoting community awareness and preparedness when it comes to fire safety. I will work to educate residents about fire prevention and safety measures, and partner with our fire department to provide outreach programs and resources to keep our community safe.

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?

- **HJK:** We need to support working-class families being able to afford their homes by weatherizing our older housing stock. Invest in diverse, lush vegetation that helps keep our neighborhoods cool with canopy and mitigates the spread of tree diseases like EAB. We must strengthen energy codes to ensure new development

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

includes green infrastructure like solar panels, wind turbines, and geothermal energy. We can expand our Evie, electric carsharing network. Within the first six months, it has reduced an estimated 741 metric tons of greenhouse gas; our full fleet is 175 cars. As we build out green infrastructure, I also want to be in conversation about green gentrification. The City of Minneapolis created Green Zones based on climate change vulnerability and pollution exposure to ensure those most affected by legacies of racist planning benefit from environmental investments. Green Zones encourage equitable distribution of community assets to improve food security, economic growth, air quality, and create green housing options through land use policy. These seem like a straightforward, replicable idea for Saint Paul!

- **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
- **NN:** does not have this answer on website.
- **PT:** does not have this answer on website.

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?

- **HJK:** Being connected with resources, people, and places of enjoyment is an important pillar of neighborhood and community stability. In my area, 18% of my neighbors do not have vehicles in the house, and 38% are single-car households. Building reliable and resilient transportation methods is essential to combat climate change. And I am interested in centering how public transportation fosters happiness through planning and design. Studies at the U of MN show that walking and biking are the happiest ways to commute and are our most environmentally friendly. Public Transportation is important to me because we have the powerful opportunity to build infrastructure that helps create a culture of care and happiness. One of the Transit Fare Elimination Pilot Routes is the 62, which runs through the heart of my neighborhood and Ward. Chosen for the above reasons, we highly demand reliable and connected transit. I would support expanding the pilot in other areas and neighborhoods that benefit from free fares. Public transit systems are a public good and I would love to co-create ideas for incentivizing ridership beyond free fares. Once transit is free, we must ensure it continues to be networked and create perks and incentives for ridership.
- **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
- **NN:** does not have this answer on website.
- **PT (from website):** Our city's infrastructure is in dire need of attention. Four years ago, during the last city council election, candidates were discussing the bad roads. Since then, we still have the same problems, and maybe worse. We must improve the city's infrastructure because it is crucial for enhancing safety, accessibility, and the overall quality of life for all residents. I will work to repair and upgrade our streets, sidewalks, and public spaces, making them safer and

more accessible for handicapped persons, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike.

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?

- HJK: Being strong stewards of city resources means finding ways to alleviate the toll on taxpayers. A portion of our tax base does not contribute to property taxes. I would support a Payment in Lieu of Taxes program and reconsider the criteria for Tax Increment Financing. In addition to the city, our schools suffer by allowing exemptions from paying property taxes. We also rely on Local Government Aid to fulfill our core city functions, and we will continue to advocate for more significant assistance from the state. We need to find small but consistent ways to grow our taxable base by developing vacant lots, vacant buildings, and brownfield sites through our Inspiring Communities and 4D Rehab Programs in the city.
- DGS (from website): My top priority as a councilmember is to restore the voice of our neighborhoods – in particular, our democratic voice. I write this in response to a series of events that we have witnessed, and continue to witness across the city, in which our neighborhoods are shut out of our decision-making processes. I saw this first-hand in my area of the Como neighborhood with the demolition of the historic St. Andrew’s church building. My neighbors, many of whom I have known my entire life, took their time and energy to engage politically in defense of this building – citizens coming together, researching in the city archives and libraries, and championing our history at the most local of levels... As a political scientist, I’ll say it proudly: This is what democracy looks like! Of course, this hardly mattered. Rather than work towards meaningful community engagement, our city leaders instead chose to push their preferred outcome as swiftly as possible. Our “voice” became little more than a box to be checked prior to demolition, and my neighbors – people who I know and love – were branded as outspoken activists and discarded as a “small, but vocal minority.” This is more than just my corner of Como – it is part of a much larger pattern of top-down decision-making in which our neighborhoods, our communities, and our St. Paul residents are cut off from real, meaningful engagement, and left without a real voice. Perhaps most concerning, our leaders have done this in the most brazen of ways, creating very deep divides across our communities that are even prompting long-time residents to leave our beloved city. Here are just a few examples:
 - i. Trash – The city fought against our citizens to keep trash off the ballot, eventually losing before the MN Supreme Court.
 - ii. Summit Avenue – The city is currently fighting against our neighbors on Summit Ave to put in place a bike lane that will kill up to 950 trees (estimated).

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

- iii. Hamline Library – The city is currently fighting our concerned citizens to demolish a perfected serviceable, library that is registered on the national registry of historic places.
- iv. Rent stabilization – The city unilaterally decided to amend the ordinance passed by voters with a series of exemptions that have left all parties unsatisfied.
- v. Lexington Avenue – The city gave the OK to the new Lexington Ave development, ignoring the voice of our communities who were concerned about the impact of gentrification and increasing costs of housing in the area.

Ultimately, we need new leadership – people who are truly willing to listen to our neighborhoods, and incorporate their perspectives and understandings into our policies. This requires more than pointing to our district councils. Rather, we need a cultural shift regarding how, and at what moment, our neighborhoods are brought into our policymaking. This will require new leadership, particularly community-driven leaders who are capable of articulating the role of our neighborhoods in relation to our political and democratic values.

- **NN (from website):** Having served on the North End Development Team and the City's Neighborhood STAR Board, I understand the need to support the growth of existing businesses and create more businesses in our Community.
 - i. I will work to expand apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs in schools,
 - ii. Re-formalize a Neighborhood Development Center in the North End,
 - iii. Work with the City to improve awareness of business resources, and
 - iv. Champion and foster community-initiated development
- **PT (from website):** As a taxpayer, I understand the importance of responsible budgeting and fiscal management. I will be a vigilant watchdog of the city's finances, scrutinizing every dollar spent and advocating for smart, sustainable investments that benefit our residents and local businesses. I believe we must spend money on city services that all people benefit from. We can't have our roads in terrible condition and then start planning some project that costs millions of dollars.

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?

- **HJK:** I've spent the last several years working to elect progressive women, women of color, and LGBTQ women to offices that represent our communities. I've worked visibly and behind the scenes to see myself and our shared values represented in places of power. Over several years, I've knocked on thousands of doors in the Ward and spoken to thousands of our neighbors. I've seen how barriers to participation have gotten better and how the political will of our

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

people doesn't match the political will of our elected bodies. I feel strongly that, more than ever, young folks, BIPOC folks, need to see and hear the vision and values we have been working towards with urgency. We all made a promise to each other last year when we won the trifecta. We are done with resisting. We are ready for our bold future. We are no longer interested in political emergencies that benefit the few. We must root ourselves in where we have come from, what we are fighting for, how far we must go, and who is by our side. Fighting for a more participatory, multi-racial democracy is crucial because we pick up where our ancestors left off.

- **DGS (from website):** I'm running to become the first Latino Councilmember in the history of St. Paul. I'll also share a few reasons why you should take this seriously: Nationally, Latinos account for 19 percent of our population and over half our population growth. In Minnesota, our Latino community is also growing tremendously, and has more than doubled over the past 20 years to reach nearly 350,000 people. About 70 percent our Latino community is based in the Twin Cities metro area. The central challenge is that we don't have leadership; we have virtually no political leaders who represent our Latino communities here in the Twin Cities. Beyond this, our leaders have been extremely reserved (to use gentle language) in their efforts to reach out. The end result is that we see much lower voting rates across Latino communities. I don't think it is hard to see why: why vote when your leaders don't represent you? I'm not going to be so naive as to claim to represent all our Latino communities. But, I think that getting people into seats of power, visibilizing our communities and issues, and inspiring future generations — this is how it starts, and this is what progressive politics is supposed to be about. I am proudly Peruvian-Minnesotan. My mother immigrated to Minnesota from Peru, and my father is from Minnesota (Minneapolis). I was raised speaking both English and Spanish at home, and grew up going to a camp, La Semana, to stay in touch with my roots while being in Minnesota. At the same time, when I was younger, St. Paul had a much smaller Latino community, and for my brother and I, our Peruvian identity was something that we, unfortunately, tried not to emphasize — when you are growing up, you want to fit in, and you don't want to be the one eating green peruvian rice and quinoa (very low trade value at the lunch table in Minnesota)! Over time, of course, I've shifted my understanding, and have come to view my Peruvian-Minnesotan heritage as part of what makes me unique, and part of what has given me the perspectives that I have. It has also helped offer me the opportunity to live around the world — I've been able to work in Chile (Santiago), Peru (Lima and Cusco), and Mexico (CDMX and Oaxaca). I've even had the opportunity of teaching violin for a youth orchestra in a small town in rural Oaxaca. Ultimately, I think restoring the voice of our neighborhoods means being more racially, ethnically, and ideologically inclusive, and St. Paul is full of stories and values we still need to hear about.

- **NN (from website):** St. Paul residents are hard-working, honest folks, and should expect that their tax dollars go to a government that works just as hard for them.
 - i. I will be visibly accountable and accessible to our Community,
 - ii. Work to ensure the concerns of residents are heard and followed up on,
 - iii. Make it easy to stay informed of activities, opportunities, and programs available in the Ward,
 - iv. Expand engagement and communication with residents
- **PT:** does not have this answer on website.

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?

- **HJK:** I often look to bell hooks when she discusses leading from the margins. Decentering whiteness means the fringe is the place for resistance, a radical edge. The goal isn't to move to the center but to cling to the fray because that is where we unweave and unravel whiteness. Where we imagine and create new worlds.; it is not only possible but threatening to the status quo. To me, co-governance and our people-centered democracy live there. It is both about our relationships with electeds, but it also questions consensus. Just because most grasstops think something is okay may perpetuate dehumanizing views. Ultimately, co-governance is how you wield power powerfully together. A people-centered democracy brings policy platforms forward through relationships and coalition work. My campaign has slowly built a big coalition across labor, issue-based organizations, community leaders, families, and youth. I am building on relationships, building on trust, building on shared values, and building our shared vision. In conversations with my neighbors, I repeatedly hear folks seeing the opportunity to have a council that mirrors the people's political will.
- **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
- **NN:** does not have this answer on website.
- **PT:** does not have this answer on website.

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?

- **HJK:** I was honored to serve on the Saint Paul Planning Commission (PC), during which we voted on a zoning appeal for a church to utilize its lower-level space as a shelter for folks experiencing homelessness. There were many concerns regarding the shelter. There had been numerous community engagement sessions, paired with neighborhood complaints, and most of the testimony I read was dehumanizing of the people experiencing homelessness. During a PC meeting, I would hear passionate thoughts about values only to concede to the limitations of zoning regulation or whether or not a shelter was a permitted use

Candidate Questionnaire

Ward 5 Candidate Responses

for a church. I voted for what I believed to be within the scope of a church and would allow them to serve our most vulnerable community members without restrictions. I chose this example because having political courage in the context of power and privilege is often having just basic human decency. Unfortunately, it's a low bar. I saw how city processes create conditions to continue dehumanizing our marginalized communities. I saw how shared community values are disconnected and discouraged in places of power. Because of this, I am committed to shifting political will to match the people's will.

- **DGS:** does not have this answer on website.
- **NN:** does not have this answer on website.
- **PT:** does not have this answer on website.