About Talking Transition

Talking Transition D.C. is an innovative civic engagement, policy, and grassroots initiative that transforms the typically insular, closed-door process that occurs between Election Day and Inauguration Day into an opportunity for broad civil discourse – and ultimately a stronger, more equitable democracy.

A partnership of National Institute for Civil Discourse, the Urban Institute, DC Vote, DC Working Families, with technical support from HR&A Advisors and Public Engagement Associates, Talking Transition D.C. brought together thousands of Washingtonians to join open conversations about our city’s most pressing public policy issues, share ideas, and raise questions that affect every neighborhood.

Talking Transition D.C. hosted policy discussions, neighborhood canvasses and an online survey (8,500 respondents total), and a culminating 21st Century Town Meeting™ that solicited input from everyday citizens who are usually left out of critical leadership transitions.

Talking Transition D.C. was funded by the Open Society Foundations, whose mission is to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable and open to the participation of all people.

http://www.talkingtransitionsdc.com/
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 2

Town Meeting Purpose and Format .......................................................................................... 9

Town Meeting Demographics .................................................................................................. 10

Town Meeting Focus: Engaging Residents on the District’s Key Policy Issues ...................... 12

  DC as a Growing and Changing City .................................................................................. 13

  Jobs ..................................................................................................................................... 16

  Public Education .................................................................................................................. 20

  Public Safety ........................................................................................................................ 23

  Housing ................................................................................................................................. 26

Other Issues of Concern: Recommendations ............................................................................ 30

How to Involve Residents in City Affairs ............................................................................... 31

Evaluation of the Town Meeting .............................................................................................. 32

Recurring Themes from Across the Day .................................................................................. 33

Town Meeting: Our Team ......................................................................................................... 35

References for Facts in this Report .......................................................................................... 36
Executive Summary

Overview
On January 17th, 400 Washington, DC residents met at Walter E. Washington Convention Center to share their hopes and concerns for the District and respond to Mayor Bowser’s agenda by highlighting their policy priorities and recommendations for the coming four years. The 21st Century Town Meeting™ was convened and facilitated by the National Institute for Civil Discourse with the assistance of Public Engagement Associates.

Over the course of six hours of briefings and deliberation, participants offered dozens of recommendations and voted to determine their collective priorities. Four themes recurred throughout the day. Participants wanted the Mayor to:

1. Target District programs to neighborhoods that most need it, and particularly Wards 7 and 8.
2. Invest in youth, particular regarding jobs, public education, and public safety.
3. Focus on vulnerable groups, notably seniors, the homeless, and ex-offenders.
4. Lift the voices of residents, by bringing them into all important decisions, and, particularly, by putting them on an equal footing with developers.

The work of these 400 residents, detailed below, deserves significant consideration by DC’s policy makers because:

- Their demographics matched the city’s closely in household income, in race and ethnicity, and in where they lived across DC (while somewhat over-representing female residents and residents 35 and over);
- Meeting participants worked from a common basis of relevant facts on how the city has grown and changed in recent years, on jobs, public education, public safety, and housing, and on the Mayor’s agenda in these four policy areas;
- Before making recommendations, they deliberated at length, with the guidance of facilitators; and
- Priorities were based on the votes of everyone in the room.

All participants received a discussion guide containing factual information about each issue and then were randomly assigned to different tables. Each table was provided a trained, volunteer facilitator to keep the conversation going and make sure every voice was heard. Ideas, insights, and priorities from each table were captured on computer tablets by a volunteer scribe and analyzed in real-time by our “theme team”. Participants then were polled on the resulting themes, revealing the priorities of the full gathering.
Town Meeting Focus

We began the meeting by asking participants to consider the District’s dramatic change and growth over the past decade and identify the aspects they liked and those that sparked concerns.

We then asked participants to give their views and make specific recommendations on the four issues of most concern to Washington, DC residents:

1. Jobs
2. Public education
3. Public safety
4. Housing

We kicked off each segment by briefing participants on relevant recent history and facts and the key items in the Mayor’s agenda regarding this policy area. Participants at each table then reviewed the agenda and offered additional recommendations, which we analyzed in real-time for common themes. Each segment closed with a “pick three” vote by all participants to determine their top agenda items and a second vote to select the most important additional recommendations.

At the end of the meeting, after additional discussion, participants had the opportunity to offer the Mayor recommendations on any subject of concern and, in particular, on how to give citizens greater voice in city affairs.

DC as a Changing, Growing City

Participants heard how the District is changing: the population has grown dramatically and will continue to do so for years to come; the city’s racial, age, and language mix is in flux; the housing and development boom has caused serious challenges; schools, recreation centers, and libraries have been bolstered by significant public investment; income, educational, and housing disparities persist; and more.

After discussing what they liked and what concerned them regarding DC’s change and growth, participants prioritized their own ideas:

What We Like about the Changing City

66% Investments in schools, recreation centers, libraries, etc.
62% Vibrant and revitalized neighborhoods
55% Increased diversity in residents
55% Economic growth and health

What Concerns Us about the Changing City

73% Housing costs
67% Parts of the population “falling through the cracks”
60% Lack of community input and involvement
47% Gentrification
Jobs

Briefing highlights: declining unemployment rates and the projection of nearly 90,000 new jobs; minimum wage increasing toward a living wage; summer youth employment going strong; high unemployment rates in Wards 7 and 8; disparities in household income across the city; a third of DC adults lacking a high school diploma and 20% lacking basic literacy skills; and poor alignment between job training and needed skills; among others.

The two jobs priorities from the Mayor’s agenda that participants ranked highest echoed the themes of targeting key neighborhoods with the greatest need and investing in youth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen’s Top 2 Priorities from the Mayor’s Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>72%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>58%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to consider issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda, participants proposed four recommendations to the Mayor, including a focus on targeted neighborhoods (Wards 7 and 8) and a focus on education for DC’s youth:

- **Provide Career & Vocational Education in High School:** “Start training kids earlier” and keep it going - begin career/vocational education in high school for specific and relevant jobs
- **Focus on Wards 7 & 8:** Train people in Wards 7 and 8 to seek jobs throughout the City, and create more jobs in Wards 7 and 8
- **Hire DC Residents First:** Hire DC residents first - expand current programs and enforce the requirements for employers to give preference to DC residents
- **Reduce Barriers to Employability:** Provide more affordable child care options to increase employability - “reduce the barriers to get to work”
Public Education

Briefing highlights: five years of increased enrollment in DCPS; large percentage of students attending public charters; increases in test scores; modernization of many facilities; large achievement gaps along with high variability in school quality; uneven enrollment across the District; and, persistently low high school graduation rates.

The two education priorities from the Mayor’s agenda that participants ranked highest were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen’s Top 2 Priorities from the Mayor’s Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56% More Career &amp; Technical Programs: Provide more career and technical education programs for older students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52% Expand Community Schools: Expand the number of “community schools” that offer health, social services and community programs in addition to academics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to consider issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda, participants proposed four recommendations to Mayor Bowser, several of which again focused on vulnerable populations and schools:

- **Increase Inter-agency Coordination on Underperforming Schools**: Increase coordination between agencies in support of underperforming schools
- **Encourage School-Community Partnerships**: Encourage school partnerships—especially with community, non-profits and businesses
- **Expand Charter School Accountability**: Expand charter school oversight and accountability
- **Focus on Populations with Unique Challenges**: Focus on adults in need of educational opportunities (ex. homeless, ex-offenders)
Public Safety
Briefing highlights: the decline in homicides and robberies; truancy, youth re-arrest rates, and hate crimes also in decline; increases in gun violence, domestic violence, and sexual assaults; challenges with emergency services; public safety concerns disproportionately felt in Wards 7 and 8.

The four public safety priorities from the Mayor’s agenda that participants ranked highest again demonstrated participants’ desire to target key populations and vulnerable groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen’s Top 4 Priorities from the Mayor’s Agenda</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve Policing &amp; Accountability: Improve policing by promoting community engagement, integrating new technologies (such as body cameras and mobile devices), and increasing accountability for police misconduct</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Improvements in Highest Need Neighborhoods: Target improvements to those neighborhoods most in need of dedicated police resources, in particular strategies for the most violent and repeat offenders</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent Youth Truancy and Violence: Prevent truancy and violence among youth by investing in effective education and work programs</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve Emergency Services: Improve emergency services by recruiting and retaining highly qualified paramedics and ensuring first responders have the equipment they need to do their jobs</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked to consider issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda, participants proposed four recommendations for Mayor Bowser’s administration:

- **Focus on Police-Community Relations (not just engagement):** Train the police to relate to the community it serves - “focus on community relations rather than just engagement”
- **Increase Foot Patrols:** Increase foot patrols in all neighborhoods - “we used to have beat cops-that was good-need to know who lives where”
- **Require Sensitivity Training for 1st Responders:** Require first responders to undertake cultural and sensitivity training in interacting with specific populations, e.g., same sex partners, mental health issues, victims of domestic violence and others
- **Hire District Residents:** Hire first responders who live in DC

**Housing**

Briefing highlights: the increased cost of living in DC, 18% higher than the national average; the housing boom, especially for high-end housing; the decline in affordable housing; gaps in government-supported housing; increasing rates of homelessness; persistent high poverty rates, especially for people of color.

Participants showed their desire to focus on vulnerable groups and have residents’ voices lifted as more than 50% ranked these three items on the Mayor’s agenda in their top three:

The three housing priorities from the *Mayor’s agenda* that participants ranked highest all focused on vulnerable segments of the population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen’s Top 3 Priorities from the Mayor’s Agenda</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>55%</strong> $100 Million for Affordable Housing: <strong>Dedicate $100 million annually to increase affordable housing and produce 10,000 units each year</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>54%</strong> Strategically Support Homeless Families: <strong>Make sure families don’t have to become homeless in order to get services and housing, and that the support systems that serve them are coordinated and effective</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>48%</strong> Reserve 20% of Units for Low-Income Households: <strong>Reserve at least 20% of units built on District-owned land for low-income households, and focus construction subsidies on mixed-income developments</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to consider issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda, participants proposed four recommendations for Mayor Bowser including an intensive focus on several different, vulnerable populations in the District:

- **Redefine Eligibility:** Redefine eligibility for affordable housing in a way that meets the needs of low income residents
- **Transform How We Support the Homeless:** Need to go beyond closing DC General to support homeless, should provide full wrap-around services (education, counseling, family support)
- **Support Seniors:** Support seniors - help them stay in their homes/and provide housing security
- **Ensure Accountability for Developers:** Ensure that developers follow through on low income housing commitments; more oversight & accountability
Additional Messages for the Mayor
Late in the day, participants were asked to make recommendations to Mayor Bowser on any issue. Six themes emerged from the dozens of issued they raised:

- **Pursue Representation for DC:** The constraints of “home rule” are untenable; we need to pursue statehood or other options that provides representation for District residents
- **Make People’s Voice a Priority:** Make the people’s voice a priority in governing
- **Restore Trust in Government:** We need an ethical and open government we can trust
- **Commit to Green:** Keep commitment to green initiatives, the environment
- **Provide a Living Wage:** Raise minimum wage-make it a living wage
- **Provide Better Parking:** We need more and better parking options downtown and in our neighborhoods

How to Involve Residents in City Affairs
At the conclusion of the meeting, each table determined the message they would like to send the Mayor on how to improve citizen involvement in city affairs. These included:

- **Solicit Citizen Feedback Before Major Decisions are Made:** Use District funds to hold more community forums in each ward to hear feedback and suggestions from residents before major decisions are made.
- **Hold Quarterly Town Halls to Report Progress:** Sponsor a quarterly town hall that incorporates a progress report on action items from previous meetings.
- **Provide Liaison between EOM & Neighborhoods:** Have an independent, good quality person to be liaison between the Mayor’s office and the neighborhoods (like an ombudsman)
- **Respect Divergent Voices:** We need to create spaces for city leadership to listen to respectful discourse of divergent voices.
- **Use Digital Engagement to Include More Voices:** Use multiple forms of digital engagement through via live feed televised events using phone and online voting to include more voices.
- **Give ANC’s a Greater Voice:** Establish a Mayor’s office of ANC liaison to give ANCs more of a voice
- **Best Wishes:** We wish you well – we’re hopeful!
Purpose
On January 17th, 400 Washington, DC residents met at Walter E. Washington Convention Center to share their hopes and concerns for the District and respond to Mayor Bowser’s agenda by highlighting their policy priorities and recommendations for the coming four years.

The town meeting was convened and facilitated by the National Institute for Civil Discourse with the assistance of Public Engagement Associates.

In a city that is often divided by race, income and geography, the Talking Transition DC Town Meeting was a rare public meeting where the demographics of those in attendance were very similar to the city as a whole. In particular, keypad polling of all participants revealed that the racial breakdown of participants, their incomes and the different Wards they came from very closely matched the demographics of the city’s 650,000 residents.

Format
The format for the Town Meeting channeled the informed and thoughtful deliberations of every member of this diverse and highly representative group of DC residents. Rarely do people from neighborhoods as diverse as Brookland, Adams Morgan, Congress Heights, Petworth, Deanwood, Cleveland Park, and Anacostia come together to discuss the city’s issues. The result was valuable feedback about what people from all over the District want the new Mayor to do.

All 400 participants received a discussion guide that contained the basic facts about each issue and then were randomly assigned to different tables. Each table had a trained, volunteer facilitator to keep the conversation going and make sure every voice was heard. At each table, a resident volunteered to serve as a scribe to capture the highlights of the conversation on a tablet computer. All participants received a wireless polling device to register their views and prioritize issues.

The comments from more than forty tables were analyzed and developed into themes that summarized the main ideas from all residents. Since these table conversations were informed by data and incorporated the views of people from all over the city, the many themes that were developed and the results of the polling reflect more than just individual views. They reflect the shared wisdom of DC residents that emerged during a day of learning and dialogue with each other.
Town Meeting Demographics

The Talking Transition Town Meeting featured a very unique cross section of 400 Washington, DC residents and very representative of the broad diversity of the city. The demographics of attendees were also largely representative of the District’s population, compared with 2010 Census data, across race/ethnicity, income, and where people live in the city. The meeting also had a wide variety of participants of different ages and educational levels, but the participants tended to be a little older than the average District resident and there were significantly more women than men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARD LIVED IN</th>
<th>TALKING TRANSITION</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward 1</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 2</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 3</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 5</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 6</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 7</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 8</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME</th>
<th>TALKING TRANSITION</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-49,999</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-74,999</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $75,000</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE/ETHNICITY</td>
<td>TALKING TRANSITION</td>
<td>CENSUS DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino or Hispanic</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American or Indian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>TALKING TRANSITION</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>TALKING TRANSITION</th>
<th>CENSUS DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 and under</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and better</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW LONG LIVED IN DC</th>
<th>TALKING TRANSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50 years</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50 years</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a DC resident</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Town Meeting Topics

Participants discussed:
• DC as a Changing, Growing City
• Jobs
• Public Education
• Public Safety
• Housing
• Other Issues of Concern
• How to Involve Residents in City Affairs

The Town Meeting was an opportunity for participants to talk with their fellow residents about the issues affecting every neighborhood and ward in DC, and to give Mayor Bowser input as she begins to govern.

We began the meeting by asking participants to consider the District’s dramatic change and growth over the past decade and identify the aspects they liked and those that sparked concerns.

We then asked participants to give their views and make specific recommendations on the four issues of most concern to Washington, DC residents:

1. Jobs
2. Public education
3. Public safety
4. Housing

We kicked off each segment by briefing participants on relevant recent history and facts and the key items in the Mayor’s agenda regarding this policy area. Then people engaged in facilitated discussions at their tables for half an hour. The first part of the conversation focused on what people thought were most important about Mayor Bowser’s proposals and the second half on developing additional recommendations to make to the Mayor. Their additional recommendations were analyzed in real-time for common themes. Each segment closed with a “pick three” vote by all participants to determine their top agenda items and a second vote to select the most important emerging recommendations.

After these policy discussions and prioritizations were completed, participants engaged in two important, final, discussions:
• What additional messages on any subject would your table like to send to the Mayor?
• What needs to be done to give citizens a more effective voice in city affairs?
**DC as a Growing and Changing City**

**What We Presented …**

Before residents engaged in table conversations, they were presented critical background information that helped them to understand the relevant data and issues on how the city is growing and changing.

First, residents learned about relevant data from the city-wide survey conducted on policy, engagement, and prosperity issues facing the city. Surveyed residents feel largely positive about their ability to lead the life they want in the District, although Ward 7 and 8 residents feel more neutral than residents in the other six Wards.

Then, a more detailed, factual presentation was made. Here are some of the highlights of what participants learned about how the District is changing:

**Population size and rate of growth.** Our city’s population is now at more than 646,000 people — a number we haven’t seen since the 1970s, and has grown at a rate of 1,100 new residents each month for the past three years.

**Likely future growth.** Our growth is predicted to continue, and could hit almost 733,000 people by 2022 — that would be a 22% increase from 2010.

**Changes by Age.** From 2000-2010, DC’s elderly population fell by about 1,000, though it grew in a few neighborhoods. Meanwhile, in 2011, nearly 67% of newcomers to DC were ages 18 to 34, up from 57% in 2005. While 18- to 34-year olds now make up about 1/3 of our population, across the US, this age group is only about 1/5 of the population.

**D.C.’s racial mix continues to change.** Although the city was majority African American beginning in the 1950’s, that majority began to shrink steadily starting in the 1980’s. By 2013, African Americans were just about 50% of the population. Between 2000 and 2010, roughly 50,000 more whites, 9,700 more Latinos, and 7,900 more Asians moved to DC. DC is one of few U.S. cities where population growth is being driven by an influx of whites.

**Language diversity.** 15% of DC residents over age 5 speak a language other than English at home, compared to 21% of the US population.

**Education Disparities.** DC has the nation’s highest percentage of adults over age 25 with college and graduate degrees. New residents to the District are, on average, even more highly educated: in 2011, 65% of had bachelors’ or graduate degrees, compared to 42% of the people already living in the city. Yet, in some parts of the city as many as one in three adults lacks a high school diploma. Citywide, nearly 20% of adults do not have basic literacy skills.

**Development boom and the high cost of living.** Luxury condos and new commercial developments are popping up all over the city. But the growth tends to be concentrated in a few areas of the city, like Columbia Heights, NoMa, Shaw, and the Waterfront. In part, this has made the District one of the most expensive places in the country to live (18% higher than the national average in 2012). As a result, real estate development is driving up home and rental prices, and the number of rentals available for under $800/month decreased from 65,000 in 2005 to only half as many by 2012.

**Upgrading Schools.** 40% of the city’s 106 active public school buildings will be new or completely modernized by summer’s end; since 2000, 75% have undergone major construction.
Aging transportation infrastructure. DC has an aging transportation system. Many streets have not been rebuilt for 50 years, and we need major improvements to the Metrorail system, to dozens of bridges, and to traffic signal and lighting systems around the city.

Improving recreation and playgrounds. Since January 2010, the city has renovated more than 50 playgrounds and added 14 new ones. But about 30 playgrounds still need to be modernized.

Shortfalls in public housing. 22% of DC’s 8,300 public housing units have been rehabbed recently, but the great majority of the remaining units are also in need of repair. Many were built in the 1960s, but some were built in the 1930s, and there is a lot of work to be done.

What Participants Discussed and Recommended …

After the presentation, residents were asked to address two questions at the tables about the way Washington, DC is growing and changing as a city:

1. What do you like most about the way the city is growing and changing?
2. What concerns you most about the way the city is growing and changing?

What Participants Liked. At the end of the discussion, five main themes were identified from the table discussions about what residents liked about the changing city. Residents were allowed to vote for three themes and prioritized what they liked as follows:

What People Like about the Changing City
- Investments in schools, rec centers, libraries, etc.
- Vibrant and revitalized neighborhoods
- Diversity in residents
- Economic growth and health
- Improved transportation infrastructure

What participants like most about how the city is growing and changing:

- **66%** City is investing in schools, recreation centers, parks, libraries
- **62%** “Vibrant” and revitalized neighborhoods throughout the city—shopping, restaurants, and parks
- **55%** Increased diversity in residents - different cultural, economic and educational backgrounds
- **55%** Economic growth and health of the city bring opportunities e.g., new stores “Growth brings opportunities” “New energy and ideas”
- **47%** Improved transportation infrastructure makes a better connected city, especially public transportation, roads, bike paths, and the walkability of the city
Four of the five themes received votes from at least half of the participants (the fifth nearly reached 50%). The votes indicate excitement about investments the District is making in its infrastructure (civic: schools, recreation centers, parks, libraries; and transportation: trains, buses, biking, etc.). That excitement extends to the neighborhoods, many of which are now viewed as more dynamic and appealing (new stores, new energy, increased diversity, etc.)

What Concerned Participants
We identified six main themes in residents’ concerns about the changing city. Again they were allowed to vote for three themes and prioritized their concerns as follows:

What concerns participants most about how the city is growing and changing:

- **73% Housing costs** - rent is too high and there is a lack of affordable options
- **67% Some parts of the population are falling through the cracks** - young people, seniors, homeless
- **60% Lack of community input and involvement** - “developers have more influence than citizens”
- **47% Gentrification** - driving population, who could once afford to live here, out of DC
- **26% Transportation** - more congestion, effect on condition of streets, and lack of parking

Two themes (neglected populations; weak public engagement) received votes from 60% or more of the participants while the support for a third theme, gentrification, verged on 50%. Participants see that change is impacting some segments of the population more seriously than others. Participants saw at least some linkage between the high cost of housing, those populations “falling through the cracks” and the process of gentrification.

The concern over lack of community input was echoed in several subsequent policy conversations during the program, particularly the feeling that developers are supplanting citizens in their influence in how the city grows and changes.
Jobs

What We Presented …

Before residents engaged in table conversations, they were presented critical background information that helped them to understand the relevant data and issues on employment and jobs in the District.

Residents first reviewed the results of the Talking Transition DC survey question on jobs. Survey participants were asked to rate their “ability to find a job that pays enough for me to stay in DC” and the citywide results show more negative than positive feeling.

- 34% said their ability to do that was “bad or slightly bad” and only 25% said it was “good or slightly good.” A large group (41%) said it was “okay.”

- The negative sentiment was most strongly felt in Wards 6, 7 and 8, and the residents of those Wards (along with Ward 1) also felt that things are “getting worse”

Here are some of the highlights of what participants learned about jobs and employment in the District during the presentation:

Positive Trends

Compared to many other metro areas, the Washington region made it through the Great Recession relatively well, and there are a number of positive trends:

- **Overall, unemployment is down.** The unemployment rate in DC dropped from just over 10% in November 2010 to 7.4% in November 2014. In Wards 7 and 8 — which consistently suffer from unemployment that is much higher than the citywide average — rates fell by 40% during that same period.

- **New jobs are coming.** More than 28,000 private sector jobs were created over the past two years and experts predict there will be another 87,400 new jobs in DC by 2020. Our growing technology sector is leading the way, along with the tourism and hospitality industries. As a result of this growth, we are less dependent on federal spending.

- **Minimum wages will rise.** The new minimum wage increase means most low-wage workers will see their earnings and disposable incomes increase.

- **Youth summer employment remains a priority.** The DC summer youth employment program celebrated 35 years this summer, with 12,500 youth placed in jobs.

Challenges

And yet, for many DC residents, the picture on jobs and employment is not a rosy one:

- **Unemployment levels vary widely across the city.** Although the citywide unemployment rate is currently 7.4%, it is 16% in Ward 8 and 14% in ward 7. In Wards 2 and 3 it is only 2.5%. And, our 7.4% rate is still well above the national rate of 5.6%. Finally, nearly 10,000 low-income youth across our city are out of school and work.
Many lack secure employment. Although the DC area has one of the highest median household incomes in the nation (at about $65,000 in 2013), in many parts of the city, median income is substantially less than that: it’s about $25,000 in Ward 5, $26,700 in Ward 8 and $31,800 in Ward 7. Nearly 40% of DC children have parents who lack secure employment.

People are not prepared for work. Half of all jobs in DC require at least a bachelors’ degree, but, in some parts of the city, one out of every three adults lacks even a high school diploma. Citywide, nearly 20% lack basic literacy skills.

Job training and needed skills often don’t line up. DC spends over $100 million each year on “workforce development.” But our training programs often don’t line up with the jobs available now (such as in healthcare), or with those we expect in the future.

Childcare options are limited. DC provides universal pre-K for 3 and 4 year olds, but only has enough licensed childcare spots for 25% of the city’s infants and toddlers. This gap often limits the employment prospects of parents of these youngest children.

The presentation concluded with a summary of seven key elements of the Mayor’s transition plan on jobs and employment. These policy proposals were taken directly from the Bowser Administration Transition Plan and were listed as among the new Mayor’s priorities for action.
What Participants Discussed and Recommended ...

After the presentation, residents reviewed and discussed seven of the elements of the Mayor’s transition plans on jobs. In particular, they were to share with one another which items they believed were most important and to explain why.

Polling on Items from the Mayor’s Jobs Agenda

When the discussion on jobs finished, participants identified the three items in the Mayor’s agenda that they believed were most important for the next four years regarding jobs and employment in the District. They voted on the seven policy proposals as follows:

72% Make sure residents get quality training in construction, the digital economy, health care, trades, service delivery and other high-demand fields

58% Launch the “DC First” program to focus government resources and hiring incentive on historically overlooked neighborhoods

42% Foster a system that boosts small businesses: with a talented workforce, purchase-ready consumers, strong professional services, affordable office space, and a supportive government infrastructure

34% Support new and existing businesses by making it easier to navigate the city’s complicated tax and regulatory systems

27% Invest in and support new and growing business sectors such as tourism, hospitality and technology

25% Attract and hold on to federal government investment and jobs to keep this sector strong in the city

22% Bring our business taxes, policies and fees in line with our regional neighbors
Other Recommendations to the Mayor on Jobs

During the same table discussion, participants also considered issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda and proposed specific recommendations to make to the Mayor about jobs. Overall, they identified four common themes:

- **Provide Career & Vocational Education**: “Start training kids earlier” and keep it going - begin career/vocational education in high school for specific and relevant jobs

- **Focus on Wards 7 & 8**: Train people in Wards 7 and 8 to seek jobs throughout the City, and create more jobs in Wards 7 and 8

- **Hire DC Residents First**: Hire DC residents first - expand current programs and enforce the requirements for employers to give preference to DC residents

- **Reduce Barriers to Employability**: Provide more affordable child care options to increase employability - “reduce the barriers to get to work”

The first jobs-related recommendation has a clear and strong education and training component to it while the second and third emphasize the importance of the city carefully targeting its job creation efforts. The final recommendation raises the broader issue of developing ways to make it easier for residents to retain work, especially around the challenges of child care.

In addition to the broader themes identified, the Bowser Administration might also find these individual recommendations, from the table conversations, worthy of consideration:

- Encourage employers to offer year-round youth employment beyond the summer youth jobs program. Consider student co-ops

- Prepare youth for the soft skills; business etiquette training - dress, appearance, demeanor, how to interview, work ethic

- Create an incentivized apprenticeship program where jobs are tied to people working hard in a training program, get people working again. Example: a four-year electrician apprenticeship program that guarantees a job for two years after finishing the program.

- “Ban the box” - do more to enforce removing the criminal record questions from job applications

- More focus on 10% of population who are ex-offenders; establish a commission that would focus on ex-offenders job preparation and training

- Create opportunity for the vendor community to have a voice

- Stop discrimination against the elderly in hiring

- Address the digital divide … computer literacy is a major challenge for all ages and education levels

- Devise an innovative model for homelessness; give people housing and support, address the problem directly (a Utah model). This will let people get on their feet and allow many to get and hold jobs again.

- Green jobs could provide services to suburbs; e.g., renewing solar installation subsidies could revitalize industry and add unique benefits to construction industry and leapfrog areas that aren’t investing in the solar boom
Public Education

What We Presented …

Before residents engaged in table conversations about education, a presenter shared critical background information that helped them to understand the relevant education data and issues in the District.

Information was shared from the Talking Transition DC survey that gave an insight into the current way DC residents feel about their public schools. Overall, District residents feel more positively than negatively about public schools:

- 35% of residents said public schools in my neighborhood are “good” or “slightly good.” 46% said the schools were “okay” and only 20% of residents across the city said they were “bad or slightly bad.”
- Residents in every Ward believe that the schools in their neighborhood are “getting better.”

The presentation about public education in the District included both positive trends and ongoing challenges.

Positive Trends

- **Enrollment is up.** In 2013–14, DC had its largest student body in over 25 years: 80,230 students, with 46,393 in traditional public schools. After five straight years of growth — and with increases projected in the number of children living in the city — enrollment in traditional public schools could reach 60,000 students by 2022.

- **Charter schools are a major player.** About 43% of the city’s students attend public charter schools on over 100 campuses. This is a higher share than in any other big city except New Orleans. And, the number is growing fast – charter enrollment was up 10% in the last year and is projected to be fully half of the city’s student body in a few years.

- **Test scores have gone up.** DC CAS (Comprehensive Assessment System) scores showed substantial improvements between 2007 and 2014: overall, math scores were up 23%, reading 14% and science 16%. Though the upward trend has flattened out in the last year, the tests show the highest 10th grade growth in 6 years. In 8th grade math, the achievement gap between black and white students dropped 20 points between 2005 and 2013.

- **School facilities are better.** 40% of the city’s 106 traditional public school buildings will be new or completely modernized by summer’s end; since 2000, 75% have undergone major construction.

Ongoing Challenges

- **We still have big achievement gaps.** Among many examples, 2013 reading scores for 8th graders whose parents were high school dropouts were 23 points below the scores of students whose parents were college graduates. Among 4th graders, white students scored significantly higher in reading than Hispanic and Black students.

- **School quality varies…a lot.** Depending on where they live, students in DC have very different educational experiences — in the skill and experience of their teachers, the variety of classes and activities they can choose, the amount of parent and community involvement, and the academic levels of their fellow students.
Enrollment is uneven across the city. Last school year, in nearly 20% of DCPS schools, enrollment was at 60% or less of building capacity. About 30% of schools were enrolled at more than 100% of capacity. To right-size the system, over the last seven years the city has closed nearly 40 schools. DCPS currently plans to make major changes to school boundaries.

Our students aren’t graduating on time. Nearly 30% of DC students aren’t graduating on time – across the country, the rate is only 19%.

The presentation concluded with a summary of ten key elements of the Mayor’s transition plan on public education. These policy proposals were taken directly from the Bowser Administration Transition Plan and were listed as among the new Mayor’s priorities for action.

What Participants Discussed and Recommended …
After the presentation, residents reviewed and discussed ten of the elements of the Mayor’s transition plans on education. In particular, they discussed which items they believed they viewed as most important - and why.

Polling on Items from the Mayor’s Public Education Agenda
When the discussion on education finished, participants identified the three items in the Mayor’s agenda that they believed were most important for the next four years of public education in the District. They voted as follows:

- 56% Provide more career and technical education programs for older students
- 52% Expand the number of “community schools” that offer health, social services and community programs in addition to academics
- 42% Expand parent and family engagement efforts
- 30% Expand early childhood programs
- 28% Attract, develop and retain outstanding educators and school leaders
- 21% Provide targeted support to schools that are on the brink of success as well as to those that are consistently underperforming
- 16% Transform middle schools by 2020, by renovating school facilities and adding more academic and extra-curricular options
- 14% Improve the quality of special education by focusing on outcomes and teacher training
- 12% Support innovations to lengthen the school day, increase school autonomy, and better evaluate schools
- 11% Increase collaboration between DCPS and public charter schools
Other Recommendations to the Mayor on Public Education

During the same table discussion, participants also considered issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda and proposed specific recommendations to make to the Mayor about jobs. Overall, they identified four common themes from among the many ideas that came from all of the tables:

- **Increase Inter-agency Coordination on Underperforming Schools:** Increase coordination between agencies in support of underperforming schools

- **Encourage School-Community Partnerships:** Encourage school partnerships—especially with community, non-profits and businesses

- **Expand Charter School Accountability:** Expand charter school oversight and accountability

- **Focus on Populations with Unique Challenges:** Focus on adults in need of educational opportunities (e.g., homeless, ex-offenders)

The first two recommendations echo policies that the Bowser Administration already intends to pursue—to provide targeted support to schools that are consistently underperforming; and to encourage partnerships, but going beyond parent and family engagement to partnerships with organizations in the wider community.

The third recommendation focuses greater attention on the growing role of public charters and the fourth focuses on the need to improve the plight of specific demographic groups in the District. In addition to the broader themes identified by participants, the Bowser Administration might also find these individual recommendations worthy of consideration:

- Include youth in the process of deciding what is needed at school. Create youth buy-in

- Feed kids healthy, fresh food/meals

- Use the schools to prepare young people to live in a diverse community

- Do more proactively to reduce truancy - explore and address the causes (e.g. unsafe route to school); ask youth themselves about what can be done

- Introduce early intervention programs, like the Harlem Children’s Zone initiative

- Improve school security—teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn if the environment is fundamentally unsafe. Students and teachers should not be afraid at work.

- Include UDC-CC on the educational agenda and better enable them to serve students with upgraded curricula, etc.

- Consider all-year education – this would help latchkey kids, truancy, and educational slack. Agricultural calendar doesn’t benefit low-income kids or working parents
Public Safety

What We Presented …

Before residents engaged in table conversations about public safety, they received critical background information that helped them to understand the relevant public safety data and issues in the District.

The Talking Transition DC survey revealed that residents in Washington, DC generally feel good about their personal safety; residents of every Ward feel it is either staying the same or getting better. At the same time, more people expressed negative rather than positive views about police-community relations and more believe relations are getting worse rather than getting better.

- 43% of District residents feel “good or slightly good” about their personal safety in their neighborhood
- 84% think it is either “staying the same” or “getting better”

- More residents say police-community relations are “bad or slightly bad” (32%) than believe they are “good or slightly good” (24%). Residents in all Wards except 3 and 4 believe police-community relations are “getting worse”.

The presentation included both positive trends and issues of concern about public safety in the District:

Positive Trends

- **Homicides and robberies are down.** Although homicides increased slightly in 2014, they are still 20% lower than in 2010, and nearly half the rate in 2004. The number of juvenile homicide victims decreased by more than 60% between 2010 and 2013. Gun-related robberies dropped by 9% from 2011-2014. Robbery-related homicides fell 22% in 2013 alone.

- **Truancy is dropping.** Keeping youth in school directly affects delinquency and crime. After remaining steady for four years, truancy rates in DC — meaning the percent of students absent without an excuse on any given day — dropped from 27% to 18% between the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years.

- **Court-involved youth are better served.** New programs in the Department of Youth Services resulted in a 37% drop in re-arrest rates between 2011 and 2012. Overall, 84% of participating youth avoided being reconvicted.

- **There are fewer hate crimes.** In 2013, hate crimes (nearly half of which are related to sexual orientation) decreased by about 22% from the year before.

Issues of Great Concern

- **Gun violence is increasing.** Assaults with a gun rose 25% from 2011-2014. New “ShotSpotter” technology logged about 2,000 shooting incidents in 2013 (over 10,000 since 2011). Over a third of the city’s public and charter schools were within range (1,000 feet) of at least one burst of gunfire during the 2011-12 school year. DC also had an unusually high number of children struck by stray bullets in 2014 compared to previous years.

- **Domestic violence and sexual assaults are on the rise.** Among the 105 homicides in 2014, 17 of the victims were killed by relatives or others close to them — up from 12 in 2013 and 9 in 2012. In 2013, more than 5,000 Civil Protection Orders were filed, a 14% increase from 2011. In the last year, sexual assaults increased by 15%.
Emergency services face ongoing challenges. For more than 10 years, the DC Fire and Emergency Management System has struggled with staffing, fleet and equipment shortages and failures. Among a number of examples, in June 2011, 28% of the department’s ambulances were reported to be out of service because of mechanical problems. More recently, 40% of the ladder trucks failed inspection.

Truancy rates are still high. Nearly one-fifth of students are truant on any given day, and the rates are highest at schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

Problems are concentrated east of the river. Public safety concerns are disproportionately felt by residents in Wards 7 and 8, which suffered from 45% of the city’s violent incidents in 2014; 30% occurred in just 10 neighborhoods.

What Participants Discussed and Recommended …
After the presentation, residents reviewed and discussed six of the elements of the Mayor’s transition plans on safety. They also shared which items they believed were most important - and explained why.

Polling on Items from the Mayor’s Public Safety Agenda
When the discussion on public safety finished, participants identified the three items in the Mayor’s agenda that they believed were most important for the next four years regarding public safety in the District. They voted as follows:

63% Improve policing by promoting community engagement, integrating new technologies, and increasing accountability for police misconduct

57% Target improvements to those neighborhoods most in need of dedicated police resources

53% Prevent truancy and violence among youth by investing in education and work programs

52% Improve emergency services by recruiting and retaining highly qualified paramedics and ensuring first responders have the equipment they need to do their jobs

23% Provide resources to hire more officers and upgrade facilities

22% Increase the support DC provides to victims of domestic violence
Other Recommendations to the Mayor on Public Safety

During the same table discussion, participants also considered issues beyond the Mayor’s agenda and proposed specific recommendations to make to the Mayor about jobs. Overall, they identified four common themes from among several hundred comments:

- **Focus on Police-Community Relations (not just engagement):** Train the police to relate to the community it serves - “focus on community relations rather than just engagement”

- **Increase Foot Patrols:** Increase foot patrols in all neighborhoods - “we used to have beat cops - that was good - need to know who lives where”

- **Require Sensitivity Training for First Responders:** Require first responders to undertake cultural and sensitivity training in interacting with specific populations, e.g., same sex partners, mental health issues, victims of domestic violence and others

- **Hire District Residents:** Hire first responders who live in DC

The first recommendation echoes a sentiment increasingly being heard around the country, post-Ferguson, MO. The second recommendation reinforces the first by proposing that police develop better relations with the community through foot patrols.

The third recommendation underlines the increased expectation the community has for how police deal with specific segments of the population. The final recommendation emphasizes hiring from among District residents, echoing themes from the jobs segment.

In addition to the broader themes participants identified above, the Bowser Administration might also find these individual recommendations worthy of consideration:

- Develop ways for citizens to forge better relationships with the police

- Balance the population per Ward with the number of responders assigned to the Ward

- Support a demilitarization of the police and promote non-lethal methods for police to defend themselves and deal with crime. Keep protection of all life as first priority, while lethal force is a last resort

- Provide independent review of police complaints, e.g. Attorney General, community review boards

- Start earlier to build better relationships between police and youth, e.g. after school programs

- Create a forum for the police to discuss challenges of the job (counseling)

- Hire vets in public safety jobs

- Consider alternatives to incarceration, e.g. community service, job training, electronic monitoring

- Implement the Tennessee model for policing the mentally ill
Housing

What We Presented …

Before residents engaged in table conversations about housing, they heard critical background information that helped them to understand the relevant housing data and issues in the District.

To help prepare for the discussion on housing, participants reviewed responses to the survey about the affordability of housing. When DC residents were asked about their “ability to afford the kind of home I want,” by far the most common response was that it is “bad or slightly bad.” More than half of the residents surveyed said it was “getting worse” and only 13% thought it was “getting better”.

- 50% of all residents said their ability to afford the house they want is “bad or slightly bad” and only 22% said it was “good or slightly good.”
- Residents in all eight Wards said that the housing affordability in their neighborhood is “getting worse…”

Here are some of the highlights of what participants learned about housing in the District during the presentation:

- **Boom in housing**: Washington, DC is in the middle of an incredible boom – new luxury condos and rentals are popping up everywhere, along with more restaurants, stores and transit options. To be sure, DC is changing before our eyes.

- **Prosperity not shared equally**: While some DC neighborhoods are on the rise, those east of the Anacostia River have fewer people, less housing and lower incomes than they did ten years ago. In short our prosperity is not shared equally, and people who helped build the city over many years are being pushed out. The ongoing decline in affordable housing is central to this issue and has become one of DC’s most pressing challenges.

- **Our cost of living is high**: DC is one of the most expensive cities in the country. In 2012, the cost of goods and services was 18% higher than the national average. And, while personal income grew by more than 2% nationwide, in DC it grew less than half of one percent.

- **Housing costs are skyrocketing**: About one in five DC households spends more than 50% of their income on housing, although experts believe that only 30% of income should be spent on housing; 66% of low-income households do so. The number of affordable rental units in DC dropped by 48% between 2005 and 2012.

- **Government-supported housing doesn’t fill the gap**: There are more than 70,000 people on the now-closed waiting list for new public housing units. In fast-growing neighborhoods, subsidized housing is at risk, with little chance new units will be built.

- **Homelessness is on the rise**: The shrinking supply of affordable housing — and lack of public housing options — has left more and more families with nowhere to turn. On any given night in 2014 there were more than 7,750 homeless people in our city, an increase of almost 13% from 2013. Most critically, 1,231 were families with children, 20% more than the year before.
High poverty rates persist. Just over 18% of DC residents live below the poverty line ($23,492/year for a family of four), as do nearly 30% of DC’s children (compared to 23% nationally). Further, economic success in DC is closely tied to race and geography: 38% of Ward 8 residents are poor; 26% of African Americans, 22% of Latinos, 12% of Asians and 7% of Whites.

The presentation concluded with a summary of seven key elements of the Mayor’s transition plan on housing. These policy proposals were taken directly from the Bowser Administration Transition Plan and were listed as among the new Mayor’s priorities for action.
What Participants Discussed and Recommended …
After the presentation, residents reviewed and discussed seven of the elements of the Mayor’s transition plans on housing. They also discussed which items they believed were most important and articulated why.

Polling on Items from the Mayor’s Housing Agenda
When the discussion on housing finished, participants identified the three items in the Mayor’s agenda that they believed were most important for the next four years regarding housing in the District. They voted as follows:

- **55%** Dedicate $100 million annually to increase affordable housing and produce 10,000 units each year
- **54%** Make sure that families don’t have to become homeless in order to get services and housing, and that the support systems that serve them are coordinated and effective
- **48%** Reserve at least 20% of units built on District-owned land for low-income households, and focus construction subsidies on mixed-income developments
- **44%** Launch a system to connect residents to affordable homes and to government resources that can help them stay in those homes (such as tax credits and home rehab support)
- **33%** Increase community involvement in development projects and focus development on traditionally overlooked neighborhoods
- **25%** Close DC General and develop smaller shelter alternatives
- **22%** Reduces backlogs in public housing

Citizen’s Top Priorities from the Mayor’s Agenda
1. Dedicate $100 million annually to increase affordable housing and produce 10,000 units each year – 55%
2. Make sure families don’t have to become homeless in order to get services and housing, and that the support systems that serve them are coordinated and effective – 54%
3. Reserve at least 20% of units built on District-owned land for low-income households, and focus construction subsidies on mixed-income developments – 48%
Other Recommendations to the Mayor on Housing

During the same table discussion, participants also considered issues beyond the Mayor's agenda and proposed specific recommendations to make to the Mayor about jobs. Overall, they identified four common themes:

- **Redefine Eligibility**: Redefine eligibility for affordable housing in a way that meets the needs of low income residents.

- **Transform How We Support the Homeless**: Need to go beyond closing DC General to support homeless; should provide full wrap-around services (education, counseling, family support).

- **Support Seniors**: Support seniors - help them stay in their homes and provide housing security.

- **Ensure Accountability for Developers**: Ensure that developers follow through on low income housing commitments; more oversight & accountability.

The first three recommendations seek ways to better support vulnerable populations in the District, including low income residents, homeless individuals and families, and seniors.

The final recommendation echoes a concern repeated throughout the day – that developers have unfair influence on housing (and other developments) in the District and require greater accountability as they construct and, ultimately, complete housing developments.

In addition to the broader themes participants identified, the Bowser Administration might also find these individual recommendations from table discussions worthy of consideration:

- Increase the buildings covered by rent control, increase the inclusionary zoning percentage.

- Spread low income housing throughout the city not just Wards 7 and 8.

- Transition people from low-income housing into home ownership when they are no longer low-income.

- Housing First program model - giving homeless people homes and services without conditions attached.

- DC owned property should be used for the benefit of DC residents.

- Once you have affordable housing, encourage affordable shopping for the residents to maintain affordability. Also, prevent food deserts. Locate groceries stores near transit centers like was done with the Safeway at the Waterfront.

- Improve zoning standard (look at different models).

- Residential amenities to include more parks and playground within walking distance of residential clusters and accessible transportation.

- Pay scrupulous attention to the debarment list when you’re spending that 100 million. Make sure the list is up to date; and, make sure publicly funded units are high quality.
Other Issues of Concern: Recommendations

When asked to develop additional messages to Mayor Bowser on any subject, participants provided comments on dozens of different issues of concern to them. The six most common themes were:

- Pursue Representation for DC: The constraints of “home rule” are untenable; we need to pursue statehood or other options that provides representation for District residents
- Make People’s Voice a Priority: Make the people’s voice a priority in governing
- Restore Trust in Government: We need ethical and open government we can trust
- Commit to Green: Keep commitment to green initiatives, the environment
- Provide a Living Wage: Raise minimum wage-make it a living wage
- Provide Better Parking: We need more and better parking options

In addition to the broader themes identified, the Bowser Administration might also find these individual recommendations, made at the tables, worthy of consideration:

- “Support for DC statehood has to come from the Mayor’s Office—it’s a campaign”
- “Stand up to Congress!”
- “The people’s voice should be a priority in any major planning that involves their communities. Three minutes of DC City Council testimony is not enough!”
- “Please talk often with all levels of citizenry in the Districts and make sure you are listening closer to the ground”
- “Be sure to engage with the community and really listen!”
- “ANC commissioners have the right to give input and plan for the city, which is not currently happening”
- “Make transparency a priority in all you do”
- “Increase the number of modern parking meters downtown so more people can use them”
- “Encourage increased telecommuting in order to decrease burden on public transportation and parking”
- “There needs to be a major re-examination of the parking situation to make it family friendly and also workable for churches”
- “While many issues are important, please know that past failures have been because of money and cronyism. We need to stop the madness”
- “Have developers sign agreements to provide jobs and/or other benefits to DC residents and the city”
- “Plan and sustain environmentally friendly space with lots of trees and green space”
- “All city projects should meet LEED standards (And it’d be nice to have them look a little less brutalist!).”
- “Improve the environmental conditions at the Anacostia Waterfront”
How to Involve Residents in City Affairs

In the final discussion Town Meeting participants identified “the most important message your table wants to send to Mayor Bowser about how to give residents a more effective voice in city affairs.” Some of the messages were:

- **Attend Regular Forums:** Have the Mayor and top public officials attend regular public forums so that they need to respond and be held accountable to residents’ concerns

- **Solicit Citizen Feedback Before Major Decisions are Made:** Use District funds to hold more community forums in each ward to hear feedback and suggestions from residents before major decisions are made

- **Hold Quarterly Town Halls to Report Progress:** Sponsor a quarterly town hall which incorporates a progress report on action items from previous meetings

- **Provide Liaison between EOM & Neighborhoods:** Have an independent, highly competent person to be liaison between the Mayor’s office and the neighborhoods (like an ombudsman)

- **Respect Divergent Voices:** Need to create spaces for city leadership to listen to respectful discourse of divergent voices

- **Have Open Dialogue & Transparency:** Keep the open dialogue going—transparency is key!

- **Use Digital Engagement to Include More Voices:** Use multiple forms of digital engagement through via live feed televised events using phone and online voting to include more voices

- **Rebuild the ANC Structure:** Fix and build up the ANC structure, and train ANC commissioners in addition to paying them

- **Provide Multiple Avenues and Times for Input:** Use multiple avenues to educate residents about all the avenues for ways residents can give input through ANCs, zoning boards, LRAs, WMATA hearings, council members, council meetings, agency hearings, the Mayor’s office while also mixing up meeting times between day, evening and weekend so people have better chance at access

- **#AllResidentsMatter:** The welfare of residents should be the top priority and they would be engaged at all levels of governance using innovative methods and technology

- **Allow for Informed Engagement During Budgeting:** Give people the opportunity for informed engagement in the budget process

- **Give ANC’s a Greater Voice:** Establish a Mayor’s office of ANC liaison to give ANCs more of a voice

- **Best Wishes:** We wish you well – we’re hopeful!
Evaluation of the Town Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants responded to four evaluation questions. The following results show a high degree of satisfaction among those who took part:

1. How satisfied are you with the quality of the conversations today?
   a. Great! Beyond my expectations 36%
   b. Good – A valuable use of my time 51%
   c. Okay – Could have been better 10%
   d. Terrible – A waste of my time 2%

2. How confident are you the Mayor and other elected leaders will listen and respond to this input?
   a. Very confident 9%
   b. Confident 27%
   c. Not sure 46%
   d. Doubtful 18%

3. How important is it for citizens to be able to weigh in on matters affecting the city?
   a. Very important 96%
   b. Important 3%
   c. Somewhat important 1%
   d. Not important 0%

4. How interested would you be if there were further opportunities for citizen engagement?
   a. Very interested 81%
   b. Interested 17%
   c. Somewhat interested 2%
   d. Not interested 0%
Recurring Themes from Across the Day

Participants have experienced a significantly changed city in recent years. In many ways, they appreciate many of the changes – new schools and recreation centers, revitalized neighborhoods, an even more diverse populace, and a kind of growth that brings in new energy, new ideas, and new amenities. Yet, there is a parallel level of concern the changes have brought about – the city has become increasingly unaffordable, residents feel increasingly unable to influence how the city is developing, and they are worried about vulnerable populations “falling through the cracks.” As a result of the full day of discussion at the Talking Transition town meeting, four recurring themes are worth noting:

**Target neighborhoods that most need it.** In the jobs segment, participants voted strongly to “focus resources and incentives in neighborhoods that continue to struggle.” They also strongly recommended training “people in Wards 7 and 8 to seek jobs throughout the City, and create more jobs in Wards 7 and 8”. During the public education segment, participants strongly supported community schools with wrap around services for students, their families, and the local community; and proposed increased interagency coordination on underperforming schools. In the public safety segment, participants prioritized targeting improvements to those neighborhoods most in need of dedicated police resources.

Further evidence of this sentiment surfaced in the housing segment, in which participants strongly supported the Mayor’s proposal to reserve at least 20% of units built on District-owned land for low-income households. Participants also recommended redefining eligibility for affordable housing in a way that meets the needs of low income residents.

**Pay attention to vulnerable groups.** During the changing city discussion, participants worried about young people, seniors, and the homeless and how they were impacted by changes occurring in the city. In several of the discussions during the day, participants supported treating returning citizens differently so that they have a genuine opportunity to become productive citizens again upon their return. This was especially true in the education conversation, in which participants recommended focusing “on adults in need of educational opportunities (e.g., ex-offenders).”

Participants identified the plight of the homeless as another predominant concern not just in housing discussions, but also in the education discussion. Participants strongly supported the Mayor’s proposal to “make sure families don’t have to become homeless in order to get services and housing, and that the support systems that serve them are coordinated and effective.” They also recommended that the city “[needs] to go beyond closing DC General to support homeless, [and] should provide full wrap-around services (education, counseling, family support).”

Finally, participants encouraged the Bowser Administration to “support seniors - help them stay in their homes/and provide housing security.”

**Invest in youth.** A focus on youth emerged in the first three policy conversations. Participants recommended that the Administration think thinking about jobs and public education as linked rather than separate issues, especially when it comes to youth. In the jobs segment, participants strongly supported beginning career and vocational education much earlier for young people. They said “we need to start training kids earlier,” and to do so by linking such education to specific and relevant jobs. Later in the public safety discussions, participants prioritized preventing “truancy and violence among youth by investing in education and work programs.”

**Lift the voices of our residents.**
Lift the voices of our residents. Early in the day, participants bemoaned the lack of community input and involvement, particularly around new development. They perceive developers as having far more influence over these processes than citizens do. This view also surfaced during the housing discussion. At the end of the day, when residents had a chance to identify what was really important for involving citizens in the city’s affairs, participants articulated the clear need to genuinely solicit the citizenry before any major decisions are made. More broadly in their comments, participants asked that Mayor Bowser make the voice of the people central to the governing process and provide multiple ways and times (time of day, day of week, etc.) for citizens to weigh in on important matters. Finally, they emphasized the need to respect divergent voices and to remember that the voices of all residents matter.
Town Meeting: Our Team

Special thanks goes to:

Project Leaders
Carolyn Lukensmeyer (National Institute for Civil Discourse)
Kim Sescoe (Public Engagement Associates)
Theo Brown (Public Engagement Associates)

Lead Facilitators
Steve Brigham (Public Engagement Associates)
Mattice Haynes (Public Engagement Associates)

Design and Production
Daniel Stone (National Institute for Civil Discourse)
Chris Berendes (Public Engagement Associates)
Wendy Jacobsen (National Institute for Civil Discourse)
Freda Yvette Benjamin (VettGraphics)
Eric Diters (National Institute for Civil Discourse)

Technical Production
Mike Smith (One Counts)

Theme Team and Groupware System
Karl Danskin and Hala Harik Hayes (CoVision)

Presenter
Juanita Hardy (CulturalDC)

Outreach
Vickey Wilcher (Public Engagement Associates)

Event Management
Tracie Barnes (Meeting Expectations)

Communications & PR
Dedra Owens (DOT Communications)

A special thanks also goes to our talented volunteer table facilitators and theme team members, who provide invaluable contributions and support to the success of our town meetings.

For more information on this project, please go to www.TalkingTransitionDC.com.
References for Facts in this Report

DC as a Changing, Growing City
Atlantic Media/CityLab
DC Department of Parks and Recreation
DCist
Move DC
Office of the DC Deputy Mayor for Education
Sustainable DC
United States Census Bureau
The Urban Institute

Jobs
Bowser Administration
Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center
DC Action for Children
DC Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force
DC Department of Employment Services
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics
Sustainable DC
The Urban Institute
United States Census Bureau
WJLA News

Public Education
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Kids Count Data Center
21st Century Schools Fund
DCist
DC Public Schools
National Center for Education Statistics
Office of the DC Deputy Mayor for Education
Office of the State Superintendent for Education
The Washington Post

Public Safety
Bowser Administration
DC Metropolitan Police Department
DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
DC Public Schools
The Urban Institute
The Washington Post

Housing
Bowser Administration
Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center
Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness
DC Fiscal Policy Institute
The Urban Institute
The Washington Post

For full citations on the data and information presented in this Report, please visit www.TalkingTransitionDC.com