



Special Election | Ward 6

August 11, 2020

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## POLICY SUMMARIES FOR AJ AWED

– A CANDIDATE FOR THE WARD 6 SEAT ON THE MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL

– **THE WARD 6 SPECIAL ELECTION IS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 11, 2020**

– THESE ARE AJ'S POLICY PRIORITIES AND SUMMARIES.

### AJ BELIEVES: FAMILIES NEED SUPPORT TO FIGHT OPIOID ADDICTION.

**Policy Priority: Support families who are fighting opioid addiction.**

#### **Summary: Address Opioid Addiction**

In 2019 alone Minneapolis saw almost 1,400 drug overdoses, making opioids the leading cause of death on city streets. As this health crisis continues, we are seeing families across our ward being torn apart, disproportionately in immigrant, Indigenous, Black, and working-class communities. We cannot wait for the actions our community deserves from City Hall.

AJ Awed has a personal connection to the opioid crisis and has been working to support those fighting the epidemic for years. He understands and will fight for a holistic approach that will: expand access to mental health services, support treatment facilities and programs, implement better data collection processes, and respect cultural healing practices.

#### **Support and Expand Treatment Programs**

When in office AJ will continue to work alongside activists and organizations to push for evidence-based and culturally competent programs that our community deserves.

As your city council member AJ will:

- Support existing treatment facilities that provide **evidence-based addiction care services** and respect cultural healing practices
- Invest in culturally specific programs that destigmatize seeking treatment for addiction
- Expand free mental health services, especially those tailored for youth
- Invest in programs that support recovering addicts **after** they graduate from a treatment facility

#### **Harm Mitigation**

Our goal is for no person to become chemically dependent, till that point we must take immediate actions to prevent any more people losing their lives because of this crisis.

As your city council member AJ will push for:



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- Expand the accessibility of naloxone/narcan and train more government employees to use the life-saving drug
- In cases where 911 is called for a non-violent drug related incident, have first responders be health care professionals
- Push for diversion programs that place people addicted to a substance in a treatment program rather than prison or jail
- Expunge the records of those previously incarcerated on non-violent drug crimes
- Expand the locations, coverage, and hours of current syringe exchange program

### **A Holistic Approach**

As we have learned from the COVID epidemic, a disease is only as damaging as the flaws in governance and our economic systems. In order to truly tackle the opioid crisis we must address the root cause of addiction - economic marginalization and a lack of public health resources. Together we can effectively address this crisis through guaranteeing housing-for-all, transformative criminal justice reform, expanded employment opportunities, and meaningful investment from the government.

### **AJ BELIEVES: WE MUST CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A NEW POLICING MODEL.**

**Policy Priority: Abolish the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and implement a new model of policing dedicated to the wellbeing of ALL Minneapolitans.**

### **Summary: Safe Communities & the Abolition of the MPD**

The MPD has proven themselves to be a violent, unaccountable agency that visits death and destruction upon people of color in Minneapolis, exacerbating racial disparities that are already some of the greatest in the nation.

Our model of policing is currently based in violence and racism – and is a product of an obsolete 19th century model that does not deserve to be preserved. Minneapolis should lead the way in the immediate demilitarization and disarmament of MPD – with a goal to eventually phase the agency out entirely and replace it with a modern law enforcement agency dedicated to the wellbeing of ALL Minneapolitans.

### **What Does It Mean to Abolish the Police?**

It is difficult to imagine exactly what a world without a violent police force looks like. Like racism, police violence is so engrained in our collective understanding that we cannot fully imagine what a world without it looks like. As your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will push for what the community knows is right - and have the necessary conversations with everyone in the community to determine what comes next.

In the meantime, we MUST take intermediate steps to move away from our current model.



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As your city council member AJ will:

- Demand the demilitarization of MPD and immediate disarmament of all officers responding to non-violent calls - **like the one that precipitated the death of George Floyd.**
- Completely eliminate 'death by police' incidents by implementing a new model of policing that is fit for purpose and better serves people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ people, and other oppressed groups.
- Fully fund and implement a civilian-run emergency call line to provide de-escalation support to victims, thereby reducing reliance on 911 and the potential for violent police encounters.
- Implement restorative justice practices to avoid arrests for minor crimes and instead refer people to social programs, mental health services, or shelters.
- Divert offenders of less-serious domestic crimes out of the traditional criminal-justice system by providing them the opportunity to go to therapy after their arrests in lieu of jail time and permanent convictions on their criminal records.
- Decriminalize our approach to drug addiction by viewing it as a public health issue and increase resources for treatment centers and mental health services.

## **AJ BELIEVES: HOUSING FOR ALL IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT.**

**Policy Priority: Support actions and efforts that provide for public housing, rent control, and special support during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

### **Summary: Housing for All**

Housing should be viewed as a fundamental human right, not a commodity.

Right now, the most pressing need facing Minneapolis is affordable housing. This was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, but with workers facing layoffs and pay cuts, the need for affordable and stable housing is only intensifying. Addressing the affordability crisis will require bold policies capable of ensuring affordable housing for all.

### **Rent, Mortgage & Utility Freeze**

As an immediate solution to the financial emergency presented by COVID-19, AJ supports a freeze on all rent, mortgage, and utility payments for the duration of Governor Walz's Emergency Executive Order.

### **Rent Control**



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As your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will work alongside Minneapolis tenants and housing advocates to achieve a universal Rent Control ordinance for Minneapolis.

A universal Rent Control ordinance that caps annual rent increases to no more than 3% per year for all rental units in Minneapolis will allow us to:

- Protect renters from displacement.
- Help renters strengthen their communities by allowing them to stay in their neighborhoods
- Stabilize our community schools by minimizing student relocation.
- Prevent increased homelessness.

### **Protecting and Expanding Public Housing**

With an average household income of \$29,000, the only truly affordable housing option for many Ward 6 residents is public housing. While the majority of the city’s affordable housing initiatives target households earning \$50,000-\$60,000 a year, there are very few options outside of public housing that address the needs of those earning \$30,000 and below. Public housing is not only attainable for low-income residents, but it guarantees affordability by capping rental payments to 30% of the tenant’s actual monthly income, thereby ensuring residents are not cost-burdened.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, with the support of City Council, has moved forward with privatization plans for the Elliot Twins high-rises located in Ward 6, as well as the privatization of all single-family “scattered site” homes throughout Minneapolis. Turning over ownership to the same private investors and developers who created our current housing crisis will not solve our affordability issues. In fact, it will likely lead to further displacement for our most vulnerable residents.

As your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will:

- Oppose any effort to privatize public housing in Minneapolis
- Protect public ownership by ensuring all units remain in the public trust
- Ensure all public housing units are safe and equipped with sprinkler systems
- Work to secure funding to expand public housing and create more public housing units

### **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase**

To fight displacement and increase tenant control over the management of property, as your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will work to pass a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance that gives tenants the first right to purchase their building if the owner plans on selling, demolishing, or discontinuing a building’s use as rental housing.



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## **AJ BELIEVES: CLIMATE CHANGE'S LOCAL IMPACTS MUST BE REVERSED.**

**Policy Priority: Support 'Green New Deal' initiatives that will radically address local climate change impacts and lead to a more equitable economy with increased employment and widespread financial security for all.**

### **Summary: Green New Deal for Minneapolis**

We need an ambitious plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis with an emphasis on protecting those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis but are most impacted by it—our indigenous, immigrant, POC, and low-income communities.

For decades, the City of Minneapolis' urban planning decisions have sacrificed the health of our Ward 6 residents in the name of industry and economic profit, resulting in disproportionately high rates of asthma, cancer, birth defects, and cardiovascular disease. We must take swift action to reverse the health inequities that have come as result of these racist and classist policy decisions and do our part as a city to stop the global climate crisis.

As your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will:

- Work with Metro Transit to ensure the existing fleet of hybrid-electric busses are assigned to bus routes in areas of the city that currently experience the highest levels of pollution (i.e. the Southside Green Zone of Phillips, Little Earth, and Cedar-Riverside).
- Invest in Green Job Training and Certification for Ward 6 workers to provide long-term career paths in the new green economy.
- Incentivize and assist Ward 6 Small Businesses in transitioning to cleaner, green economy technologies.
- Work in partnership with Metro Transit to expand mass transit and make public transportation free.
- Prioritize equitable transit-oriented development by locating new affordable housing developments near public transit ways in Ward 6 and throughout Minneapolis.

## **AJ BELIEVES: LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS NEED TO BE SAVED AND SUPPORTED.**

**Policy Priority: Support neighborhood small business in every way possible and ensure they have better opportunities to compete against greedy corporations and elites – and bring the fight to them by opposing gentrification and displacement that we are already facing in the ward and across the city.**



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## Summary: Saving Small Businesses

Ward 6 is home to hundreds of small businesses, many owned and operated by immigrants and people of color. These small businesses are essential to the fabric of our city and our cultural identities. Prior to COVID-19, small businesses were already experiencing the pressure of gentrification and rising commercial rents; however, with the economic impact of COVID-19, they are now even more vulnerable to displacement. We must provide support for small businesses to survive, grow, and thrive.

As your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will:

- Expand the city's technical assistance program by offering low-income small businesses free legal advice for lease negotiations and low-interest loans from trustworthy community lenders.
- Oppose the sale and development of city-owned land for projects that will further exacerbate gentrification and displacement pressure for small businesses.
- Support commercial rent control.

## **AJ BELIEVES: WE WILL BUILD PEOPLE AND NEIGHBORHOOD POWER.**

**Policy Priority: Support the people and organizations in neighborhoods and build their power to directly address issues and challenges facing their communities.**

## Summary: Building People and Community Power

AJ believes that people are experts in their own lives and have the best ideas to make positive changes in their communities. As a city, we must ensure residents have a say in the decisions that most impact their lives. This means abandoning a model of engagement that simply "informs" residents in favor of one that gives community the resources to build power and craft their own solutions. Recognizing the vital role neighborhood associations and cultural organizations play in building community power, as your Ward 6 City Council Member, AJ will work to increase the city's budget to fully fund these organizations.

##END##

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– APPROVED FOR RELEASE