

## Audio file

[Mayoral Debate 2023-10-11.mp3](#)

## Transcript

Speaker 1

Thank you so, so much. First of all, I just want to say good evening to each and everyone of you and thank you for being here on behalf of Wichita Habitat for Humanity and their collaborative partner, the Wichita Journalist Collaborative, we welcome you to our mayoral forum with an emphasis on affordable housing. We also thank the candidates for their. Time and we know. That we are all. Going to respect each other this evening. Just a little. Bit about Habitat for Humanity. They've been engaged in affordable housing solutions in Sedgwick County since 1986. They pride themselves on providing affordable mortgages at 0% interest. They provide home ownership and financial education to those who have a need. For housing, the ability to pay and the willingness to partner over the years with our Habitat for Humanity has expanded its solutions to home repair. Affordable retail through the habitat restore advocacy, continued education and growing volunteer opportunities. They are currently celebrating the Rock, the block community, which is located between 9th and Grove and 13th and hillside. Celebration will be because we have 100 houses and this is the 100th house in that particular part of our City, 100. I'm so excited about that. It still gives me goosebumps because that's a community years ago when I served on the City Council, they told me the city forgot they lived there, so it was illegal dumping. There were in inadequate housing. And so now for us to have one. 100 houses is great. And I was proud to help spearhead the rock, the block initiative. And I'm proud to still be a part of this community revitalization effort. As a member of the Advocacy Committee for Habitat for Humanity, they're partnered this this evening. Is the Wichita journalism collaborative? And that is a coalition. Of news newsrooms and community partners joining forces to help meet news and information needs in and around Wichita. WJC is funded by a gift from the news and Info Fund at the Wichita Foundation. My name is Lavonda Williams. I sit on that habitat Habitat for Humanity advocacy board and I look forward to this event and I'm excited as I watch more chairs being brought in as we learn. About affordable housing and I'm going to turn it over. Now to stephania.

Speaker 3

Hi everyone. My name is Stephania lugly. I'm the Civic engagement reporter with the Kansas Leadership Journal as well as Panetta, Venice, bilingual news publication based here in Wichita. And I'm going to be moderating these folks today, so. Just an overall reminder for our audience that this is not. A debate. This is a. Forum so I'm going to. Be asking each candidate a question and they're going to have a couple of minutes to respond to it. There is no rebuttal so.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 3

So to start us off. We would like to know, tell us about what home means to you, Lily. We'll start off and your housing journey. And if you could highlight any barriers you've experienced related to housing.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

Absolutely. Well, home is not just where the heart is, but home is right here in Wichita. I've called Wichita my home for 30 years now. I came to this country as an 8 year old girl from Guam. Ramallah, who did not speak English and the very first home that we lived in, was in Southwest Wichita with my grandparents. We lived intergenerationally for quite a while, until my parents could get their feet wet and really could save so that they could buy a home for themselves. That we continued growing up in Southwest Wichita and then eventually my parents were able to look at other opportunities in Northwest Wichita where my brother eventually went to northwest high school. And then we started living at that home since 2000 and that has been our home ever since. My parents are now in their 60s and dad's about to turn 70, and I understand that for me, home is where my mom, my dad and Carlos and I lived and Carlos no longer lives here in Wichita. But I hope that one of the things that I'd love to do is to really boomerang back a lot of our wichitans, and my goal will be to try to boomerang back my brother and sister-in-law to home right here in Wichita. But in order for them to come back home, we have to work on some issues and they include public safety in our community and they also include economic opportunities for them. As they continue to thrive as young professionals and also restoring trust here in City Hall, so I'm hoping that I can boomerang them back to Wichita and have them call Wichita their home again.

Speaker 3

Thank you, Mayor Whipple.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Well, thanks for the update. Is my mic phone working?

Speaker

Of course. There you go. I don't know.

Speaker 3

One minute. You know.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

All right, we're gonna try this again. I apologize. Delis points for this. All right. Thanks. This is my wife, by the way. This is Chelsea? Talk. I think I'm good. I got a paper clip on me now, but I think I'm good anyways. All right. I'm so sorry, by the way. Thank you everyone for being here. I look around this room and I think to myself, there's got to be more fun things people can be doing on a Wednesday, but it's just a show for our community. You know how important it is that we get involved and be able to make great decisions when it comes to the future of our city. Now folks might think folks who know me is that me? That's still buzzing. OK, just hold it. So folks who know me know that I wasn't blessed enough to be raised in Wichita. I actually came here from a small town in New Hampshire back in 2003, right after a couple years after 9/11. Frankly, there's this wave of patriotism that went over my generation and I was looking for ways to serve our country and what I did is I joined AmeriCorps, and I did a service

mission for one year here at South High School to work with at risk students. And I fell in love with Wichita and let me just talk a little bit about why where I'm from in the Northeast. My mom is a waitress. My dad is a Carpenter. They're the hardest working people I know, and they've taught us that hard work is a way to achieve things. However, they will never own a house. The hardest working people I know will never own a house in the Northeast because of increased property taxes, lack of affordable housing, and lack of of houses in general. And so which out of me really represents that city that allows us to actually be the first in our family to own a house? Chelsea and I, we own our first house and we're in our 20s. And that's an amazing feeling. And it's not a feeling I think that we could have gotten in New Hampshire, where I'm from. It's not a feeling my family has never had. And my goal is to wake up every day and make sure these opportunities are there, not just for us, not just for you. But also for that next generation. We talk about boomerangs. I also think that we need to bring more people back, but I want to retain our young people and part of me, selfish, because I also want to retain my three boys. I want to make sure when they are ready to take on this world, they don't have to move to a coast they can actually get their piece of the American dream right here in Wichita. And we all know that having a home, having a place to call home. Is one of the ways that we can achieve that. So thank you.

Speaker

Right.

Speaker 3

Thank you, mayor. So our second question. We will start with Liliias again.

Speaker

What are the?

Speaker 3

Most significant obstacles to affordable housing in Wichita, and what would you do? What would you as mayor do about them?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

I had a great opportunity yesterday thanks to Danielle. The folks at Habitat for Humanity for the work that you do in trying to provide opportunities for home ownership here in Wichita. And as mayor, I want to be very supportive of nonprofit organizations that are doing that good work. I also had an opportunity to call the folks over at Mennonite. Another great nonprofit that really focuses more on seniors and rental affordable rental units. So we have nonprofits that are doing that great work. The obstacles that we're facing regarding affordable housing are things that, as a community, we need more people at the table wanting to be part of the solution. Well, one of the biggest issues with finding affordable housing or housing affordability is the lack of supply. And so that is what we need to focus on, making sure that not just neighborhoods have a seat at the table telling us these are some of the needs that we need in our neighborhood, but also. Looking at those who build and say, have you considered? Thinking about investing within the city limits to try to make that investment in filling in Wichita, but those are all things that have to have to happen with people at the table. So first and foremost, you have to have more people at the table voicing their ideas. Voicing their concerns, and then we have to have a mindset that we're going to get to some, yes, not an immediate no. So I believe that if we are all

intentional about truly finding solutions. We can get there when we are at least at the table looking at each other eye to eye and saying OK, so here are the problems. How can we find solutions and better solutions to help with affordable housing and housing affordability?

Speaker

Thank you.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So I actually agree that we need to be throwing supply at this issue. We're about 20 to 40,000 units shy of where we need to be. And since our economy is growing, our population is growing. You know, you got to build economies like you're doing it on purpose, which means if you're creating more jobs, bring more people in. You also got to worry about housing, bring more houses in as well. So we agree on that and I just want to pivot a little bit to kind of diversify the thought of this important question. Another thing is actually keeping people in their homes. And one of the things that we've done in this last City Council was really target because of inflation, because we saw the county appraiser evaluate houses at a higher level. Because the economy. We we actually have folks who are on fixed income folks who are disabled veterans and folks who who are basically lower, lower income families. Think about single moms and we were able to create a program, first one in a state where if you qualify for one of these tax deductions at the state level, the homestead tax. Or the safe seniors tax. Or another one of these taxes that are aimed for at risk or excuse me for disabled veterans. They'll give your part. The state will give you a part of their property tax back. Now, if you show us that receipt thanks to the clever budgeting that we've been able to do, show the city that receipt, we'll refund you the rest of that property tax back, which means we are the 1st. Community in the entirety of Kansas that I'm aware of where our. Seniors, those on fixed incomes are are small families that that are low income, who are struggling. The worse actually can live property tax free and that's so important because a lot of times on the bench, we'll actually have to vote on condemning a house because it doesn't have the repairs to be up to standards. And because we're saving families. At least money. Because we're saving families money, they can reinvest that money into their house. Is this A is this a?

Speaker 5

Trick, by the way.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

It's just the room, everybody the. So if it's OK with the time keep. I just want to finish my very last part of the sentence because I think it would end. So the reason why it's important to cut taxes, particularly people who need it is because those same people, the ones who wind up at City Council asking for extensions because they're afraid their house is gonna be bulldozed. That house isn't structurally sound. Now, if we can keep more money in their pockets, giving that money back, they can reinvest that into their house, which allows them to still stay in their homes and allows that home to also remain.

Speaker 6

All right, we're going to pause for a second. Will you take this off?

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Valerie saying.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Now do you want? Repeat the question.

Speaker 8

Thank you.

Speaker 6

There you go guys.

Speaker 3

Hi again. We're going to refresh. Preferably this is the last time we'll need an additional MIC. OK, so, Lily, the city's land bank was established in May 2021. Two years later, it holds just two properties and does not have a sustainable funding. Force do you believe that this needs to change, and if so, what would you do to improve the effectiveness of the land bank?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So that land bank has those two properties, especially the one at 9th and ash. And I wanted to kind of remind people about that land bank, which is different than a lot of the properties that a lot of folks have been seeing on the news that are for sale. Completely different topics, but I know that some folks have confused the two topics. Together so the land bank itself, with a board that is trying to look at how to capture better opportunities even within that land bank. I think right now with the focus on what we really need to be prioritizing, I think that the board can continue working on trying to find some of those opportunities. But I think that the priority has to be back on making sure that we have neighborhoods all across the city that. People can say we want to invest in and the places that people want to invest in usually are the places that people consider themselves feeling safe, and I want this community all pockets of our community to have that same attitude for their neighborhoods. So I think the focus has to be back on things that. Really affect all of us. That is public safety, being that number one thing. So when you talk about just the land bank itself, a very specific topic, I think that we as a Community have to ask ourselves, is that something that we want to focus all of our energies on or let a board continue coming up with some of those opportunities. And when there are opportunities bring them forth. To the City Council so that we can look at seeing if that is a good investment. But again, I believe that we need to get back to some priorities and I know that I'm hearing that the priorities continue to be on things that affect all of us and that is really on public safety and reducing crime in our neighborhoods.

Speaker 3

Thank you for that. I'm actually going to ask a follow-up question. You spoke about, you know, the value and the investment of the land bank and other community priorities. Part of the question that I'd like to hear a little bit more. On is whether. You think there needs to be some change to ensure that there is a sustainable funding source in the future for the land bank?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

I think that when it comes to funding specifically just the land bank, when you have limited resources. You all know, just like on in your own budgets, you have limited income that comes in. We have to prioritize what is most important. And to me, I've been campaigning on getting back to the basics and that is something that I'm very committed to because that's what I'm hearing from the community. Unfortunately though, over the last four years we have seen things that have continued. To be issue. Such as increasing property taxes, that affects a lot of the homeowners who are in this room. It also affects people. When we see increasing crime in our communities over the last four years, so as much as I would like to give more funding to specific items, we need to get back to priorities. And that might not be the most popular thing to say, but that is what we need to do, and unfortunately we all have to prioritize in our own lives, and I believe government needs to do the same thing.

Speaker 3

Thank you for that, mayor.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So the land makes the first question. Then we have to follow up, right. OK. So first of all, the land bank is something that needs to be adjusted as we continue to move forward with it. That's the good thing about our system of government is basically we meet every week, which means we can make adjustments to make it even better. Now basically a land bank. Think about if there's a property that is run down and the owners. Are out of state or aren't there anymore in a city? Ends up claiming that back because of tax reasons or other reasons. What do we do with it? Where it goes into this land bank? And if we're being forward thinking, sometimes we can actually work with our nonprofit partners like Habitat for Humanity, or they can actually take some of those. Some of those parcels and build houses on them, which helps us with not only with our housing. Doc. But also it does help us with public safety. Really bad things happen in abandoned houses in neighborhoods that have. Empty lots wanted to be less desirable, which also adds to public safety concerns. And as we move forward, we also have to think about when you house someone in Wichita in in one of these houses, they're more likely to utilize local businesses within Wichita. They're more likely to pay the property taxes, they're more likely to keep that money in our community. And a part of that money actually goes into our our city coffers, which pays. For what we all agree is the basics. The stuff that we expect, which is public safety, infrastructure, fire, police, water, that type of stuff. So it it really it is it's full circle and it's important that we we consider affordable housing as part of the economic development piece and as part of that public safety piece as well and. Part of that revenue that allows us to continue to give our police officers raises to continue to give our firefighters the best contract they ever got, which we did last year and continue to build in our community. So really to me it's more circular. Can it be better? You bet. That's our goal. We are looking towards a more perfect union. Of course we are not. Perfect at the moment, but that's why we do forums like this. That's where we get out. We talk to people is, hey, what's working, what's not so that we can come back and make those necessary improvements. You got a follow up.

Speaker 3

If you would like to speak to I to me, I feel like kind of you answered.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

I have it.

Speaker 3

This you. Yeah, I mean.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

OK you can. Say that it's all right.

Speaker 3

Similar reflection off of lilies, just in terms of prioritizing funding. So I feel like you covered it, but so I'll go on to our next question. So local renters have expressed concern about the quality of housing, especially in multifamily apartment complexes. Do you believe that the city should improve its code compliance enforcement?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

Over the last few weeks, I've seen the City Council meetings that have shown the conversations. I think it was the workshop itself that talked about some of our rental units that have had issues and for those who watch local television news, you probably have seen those stories of those properties. That have not been well kept and not suitable for folks to be living in and so. When we look at enforcement, we have to first and foremost make sure that structures are safe for people, so that should always be the priority. Making sure that safety, the health and safety of individuals who are living in these conditions are at the forefront of the top priority. So when it comes to code enforcement. We can always look and see if there's anything that we as a government can do to safeguard and also make sure that we're holding those apartment complex owners or management companies responsible. I know that there are many. Apartment complex individuals who either manage or own in our community and. One bad apple does not represent all and, but I do believe that we need to make sure that there's more units. So I had an opportunity to speak with a nonprofit organization leader who told me what we really are lacking are about 19,000 just rental units. That's a lot. So we need to focus back on the efforts of trying to encourage people to not just develop and build apartment complexes, but also housing and also housing at all levels, because we don't, many of our families nowadays don't need just a single family home. We might need other options and so we need to consider all of those and have them at the table.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Yeah. And I agree about the the supply. It's not just single family houses. It's not just duplexes, it's also apartments. And I'm glad that we were able to work with with our colleagues for A7 O vote to an adjustment to the ball stadium where instead of having offices, we're actually going to have apartments there. And that makes a lot of sense because we have not just one medical school that's up, but we're looking at another medical school. That's coming down the chute just in the next few years, thanks to Wichita State and Kay. You coming together. So we're gonna see even more need for housing. But so I love this forum by, by the way, this format we get to kind of build upon these comments, but when it comes to I guess enforcement of state law that helps. Really. Stop. Predatory lending of housing, predatory renting it's very important in a community like ours. We don't become some of these other communities. So I lived in Topeka when I was in the legislature and one of the issues that we were here there is basically that a lot of the landlords are from out of state and out of and they don't have like skin

in the game when it comes to maintaining the properties. And you could see that there were some neighborhoods that were very much blighted versus some other parts, that that were much. They're kept and, thanks to the work of Councilmember Hoheisel and Council member Johnson, we have policy we're putting in place to actually allow us to go and and make sure that that type of predatory behavior where you have a landlord who is renting to usually low income people, who who don't have a lot of options, that we will hold them accountable if they're create an unsafe. Living environment for those for those people, for those children and and for that family. Because in Wichita we're too good of a community to allow people to, frankly, live a socially unacceptable standard, especially when they're paying so. We have taken this on because it's a responsibility that we protect the rights of which attends and including their rental rights, so again, I wish I could take more credit for it, but I gotta tell you, it's really the work of Hoheisel and Council Member Johnson, who have spearheaded this to make sure that people who live in in what we're considered, lower income, housing and have. Hey, for that someone to to a landlord or to to renter that they are actually getting their money's worth.

Speaker 3

Whipple. You can hold it on the mic for a moment. Great. So sticking with renters for the moment, tenant unions are renter LED organizations that ensure affordable quality and safe housing for all. There is no tenants association or unions in Wichita, while other smaller metro areas like Manhattan and Lawrence do have one. Would you support a tenants union in Wichita and if so, how would you imagine a City Hall relationship with one?

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So I'm going to the best one thing to you, I actually don't know a lot about tenant unions. I know a lot about unions though, and I am Pro Union. Anytime you get folks who come together with shared interests and you create more power to to actually get things done. So I would be in support of any type of organization that is willing to help guide folks who who have been wronged basically into a creating. I guess standards that are more acceptable or utilizing the policies we put in place at the state level. I mean city level to make sure that people who were. Mistreated can actually find justice, so I'd be in support of anything that helps empower everyday folks. And I'll tell you that you know when you are. When you are. Someone with lower income and you don't have a lot of options. A lot of times you feel alone and not everyone can just go through their phone and call their buddy who graduated law school or, you know, has access to lawyers or anything. So a lot of these people do feel alone and they don't have, I guess that support network or really know where to go next. And I think about my dad and my mom. They they are not people who are going to look up ordinances, but if. You have some type of organization, rather it's a union or whatnot that can help guide you through that process and also hold that landlord accountable. I think that's a good thing. So that would be something that would be a support of, if you know, I don't know all the details of course, but I would be in support of that concept for sure.

Speaker 3

OK. Thank you, Lily. Well, I'll.

Speaker 2 (Wu)



Start off with this. So when my parents came to this country, one of the things that they loved about. The United States of America is making sure that people have the freedom to make decisions for themselves and. I believe, especially as a strong defender of First Amendment, being a reporter in my previous life, I believe that it's important for people to have their voices heard. If there's wrongdoings to speak up and let others also get their voices. Elevated. I know that when I was a reporter, I had that opportunity to help elevate some of those voices and some of those concerns. But I also believe that we have to allow. People to have real relationships with whether it's management and and before you call a television station to complain, have you actually spoken with the management company and made sure that there has been that line of communication. So when it comes to a tenant union that I'm not aware of. Here, obviously in Wichita because that has not happened, but even the concept itself of just the tenant union. Is the concept of union letting people have a voice is something that in our communities we have and I will stay again in my lane as part of a City Council, making sure that more of the voices are all heard, including. But not limited to the people who live in those apartment complexes, but also the apartment complex managers. Because a few weeks ago, when one of the management companies came before the City Council, you all talked to the individuals and said thank you for being at the table. And I believe that it's important to have all the voices at the table, not just one group of people.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 3

If you had to define affordable housing, how would you constitute that phrase?

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So that's a good question. So one of things I try not to do is get to in my own head on like what's the right answer, where I think there's a formula actually that says, hey, if you what I think it's one week of paycheck, if that's your rent, that's where you could be affordable or maybe it's every two weeks, the first paycheck. Anyways, there's a formula that you can look to that actually will say this, but the reality is affordable housing is being able to not only afford where you live, but also afford the necessities to live, so it's not so much. Hey, I can pay this house, but also or pay for this rent, but also can you afford food? Can you afford clothing? Can you afford the extras? That we would consider important when raising a family in our community. So to me, affordable housing is more than a formula, but I think there is also a formulaic answer that someone in a crowd might actually know. If you do talk to me afterwards, because I think I got it, I'm not sure. But again, affordability on housing is not just about rent, it's also about being able to afford groceries with the same amount of income that you have. Without having to go into debt. While you're paying for your rent.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So, Mayor, I have that formula because I had the opportunity to chat with Danielle and the folks at Habitat, it's 30% of your income if it goes to rent and utilities, then it's affordable. So it goes to all of us, not just folks in whatever social economic level, but just think about your own. Lives right now. Are you paying more than 30% on just rent and utilities? If it is. Is at 30% or below, then it is affordable. But when we talk about housing affordability, I think there's a difference between housing affordability and affordable housing. When we think about affordable housing, oftentimes you're thinking about

subsidies, you're talking about subsidized housing, federal subsidies that go to that specific type of program. When you talk about affordability and housing, that's really everyone in this room. It affects all of us, every single person here will be affected by housing affordability, because right now we don't have enough supply for that. Housing affordability. Oftentimes when we talk about this. Issue and I've had the opportunity to chat with some of the experts in housing. They talk about this missing middle. And there's a lot of missing middle housing that's also kind of bottlenecking a lot of that pent up demand that we need or supply that we need. But pent up demand that we have and so we need to make sure that we are encouraging more folks to think about different types of. Diverse options for housing and I really believe that when you ask the experts in the room who are part of the builders in our community. Ask them what is it that will help them get encouraged to consider building those duplexes, townhomes, triplexes, quadplexes. There are multiple options, but I think again, bringing more folks to ask who are the actual experts?

Speaker 3

All right, so we have, we have arrived to our final question for this part of the Q&A. As I'm sure both of you are aware, there is a racial and ethnic gap when it comes to home ownership. So I would like to hear about what you believe the extent of responsibility is for elected officials and the housing department to assure that there are limited barriers to underrepresented groups, including Black, Latino and immigrant communities, and accessing home ownership. And Lilly, you can go first.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

You know, as an immigrant myself and thinking about my own parents. Just a few years ago, they were able to finally pay off their home. They had been sacrificing a lot, really, making sure that. Carlos and I had a roof over our heads and I'm really grateful to them. Because they achieved their idea, a portion of their idea of the American dream, and I believe that the American dream is still alive, that people want to own homes. But that's not the only option. And we have to be realistic about that, that that is not just the only way to the American dream. Renting is also a great option. The problem is we've emphasized so much on just. Buying homes, which is still very important and I really appreciate the work of folks who are trying to help people get into home ownership, but we also need to celebrate those who choose other options, because that might make sense for them too. And renting is not bad and so we want to. Make sure that when people decide that home ownership is the route that they want to go to, that they have the knowledge necessary to have that financial literacy that they need in order to know what it takes to actually own a. Tools that I believe are so critical because we want to make sure that if you do set your path toward home ownership that you stay in your homes and that you have that savings that in case of that emergency, you're not going to not be able to pay for that mortgage. One or two months and then end up becoming like some of our houseless population individuals because they've fallen on some hard time. So again, we have to provide the tools for people, empower them to be financially literate, help them achieve the dream that they have, whether it's home ownership or renting.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So I wish Lily could have gone first. The last question could she actually knew the formula I was trying to reference? But with this one, you. Know I got. To get serious for a moment, Wichita is one of the most red line cities in America, and for folks who know what that means, that means that there is a system in place that. Robbed people of their opportunity to own a home based on who they are based on their

race based on their ethnicity and you still see remnants of that in our city based on our our separation of communities and one of the things that I'm glad that we did as a Council is by passing a non discrimination ordinance. You know, a lot of folks look towards the ordinance as solidifying rights for folks who only recently got full rights, but part of that is also you will not be discriminated against when it comes to house. Renting. Buying a house based on who you are or based on who you love or based on who, who you, where you go to worship. And that's really important because of this, our history. We want to make sure that people can get a piece of that American dream. And if you're discriminated against during that, like it's happened in the past, we will make sure at the city that we stand up for your rights because that's part of. Job now when it comes to home ownership, ownership I think is so important. I I don't knock anyone who rents my parents rent, they've rented their whole lives. I rented when I first got here. However, what makes that American dream so possible when you have access to home ownership is that house increases in value, which means that you're building that intergenerational wealth that your kids get to inherit. So one of the things that we have to do when it comes to closing that opportunity gap, particularly in the opportunities that were denied or in communities that have been denied historical historically, these opportunities is work alongside some of our nonprofit partners such as Habitat for Humanity, such as people who get in there with those first generation homeowners like myself and actually talk to us about, hey, what's expected and how to be a good homeowner. So I'm a big fan of those programs. Government can't do it all, but we can come alongside and say what can we do? What can we do to make you do what you do even better? And I'll just tell you, just don't run out of time. My brother works for have that for humanity in Austin, TX. And you know it's so it's a beautiful story to think about. This is a guy who's a second in our family to ever a home own a home. And now he's making home ownership possible for all these other people that most were the first in their family to also own homes. And that's because of the work they do in the nonprofit world. And as mayor, I want to come on. And help. Yes, I know I'll stop.

Speaker 3

OK. So that concludes our moderated Q&A Miss Daniel Johnson's not going to come up for the community Q&A. Thank you, Mayor Whipple and Lily.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Thank you.

Speaker 6

Well, good evening, everyone, and thank you all for being here. We're excited to now open up some Q&A to our community. So a couple of things for your consideration. We will have James, Chris and Marin. There are some note cards for you if you would like to write any of your questions on those note cards, we welcome that. And they'll also come around and pick those note. Cards up and then we also have a microphone up here, so we might take two or three folks that might actually want to come up and ask their question again. Questions, not comments. We want to make sure we're asking questions around affordable housing specifically. So please be respectful of this request as we want to respect you all time and the time that we have this evening. You both will have one minute to answer the questions. I'll actually go ahead and start off with some questions that we did receive. Thank you all for sending in a number of questions and to our forum. So we have a couple of pre-made questions here and we have some other questions coming up. So those. Of you that are wanting to come up and line up, you can and

then we'll have some Rovers going around picking up those questions. So our first question is to Miss Lily. How do we encourage nonprofit and for profit developers to build affordable housing for less than 150,000? For the people making less than 60,000 a year?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So over the last couple of weeks, I've had the opportunity to chat not just with your nonprofit, but also with folks who build in our community. And as you all know, over the last four years, it's been tough. Even here, locally you're having to stretch your dollar a lot thinner and a lot more difficult. Over the last four years. And when you have increasing costs for everything from the material to labor, including labor shortages, it's really difficult. To get to the \$150,000 level. But when I spoke with some of the those who build one of the things that they mentioned was, well, duplexes we could possibly build at about that. Range and Habitat for Humanity does that currently at that range, but you have that sweat equity that you get from volunteers when you have for profit folks, you'll have to consider other options than just single family homes.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So really good question. I think one of the things we do at the city, if you know about what we do when it comes to growing businesses, usually it is waiving sales tax for the materials you buy to build your business, to build a, you know new wing or whatnot new warehouse. And we could probably focus on what can we do when it comes to encouraging more building. Could we have that type of incentive we're going to allow you basically the same deal we do for people who are bringing new businesses here, where if you're building affordable housing, we're going to knock off the sales tax for that material and maybe even work in the property. Tax for the 1st 5 to 10 years. So if we can encourage that that closes the gap because one of the issues is when you have kind of infill and affordable housing, you don't make as much money. Off of it as what these developers do, where do you go and you build like a whole block over at some suburb. So instead to encourage this, we could actually take a page out of our economic development playbook and utilize that for for housing. So long as that housing fits the the, the dynamic of being affordable and being in type of spot, we need that. Yes. Sorry, Valerie.

Speaker 6

Thank you. We have a question, Senator oletha.

Speaker 9

Danielle and thanks for hosting this.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Don't mess with it.

Speaker 6

The lights on.

Speaker 9

That's better. Thank you, Danielle Johnson. So we have a high population of homeless right in the downtown area. You see them every day. I understand that a lot of them who actually get like disability

benefits monthly. They still can't get housing because of an eviction status. What can we do to help those who can't get housing because of the laws of, you know, we can try to change it, but but right now, eviction status for those homeless people to help them get into homes. And then finally I'll end with this. The money that the city got. To spend on the homeless, how would you spend it? Thank you. Thank you, Danielle.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

That is actually a topic that gets brought up almost. I know that this is about housing specific, but we do get a lot of questions regarding our houseless population and I will start off by saying I really applaud the nonprofits in the sector. That are doing the work, humankind ministries being among the group of individuals doing that work. And one of the things that they're doing is trying to help individuals get back on their feet. So if you have experienced those evictions and you have that record, they're trying to help individuals get back onto a track record that they are going to be a favorable tenant for someone who is going to provide that. Unit. So we need to keep supporting nonprofits, especially as community members that help with making sure that individuals get back on their feet and can get back on track. When it comes to just in general, I think that's what Senator Oletha Faust Gadot just said. Really, there's a there's a pocket of money that the city of Wichita is moving forward with, and it's because of a group that literally meets in this very room once a month. The homeless task force. Meetings and I'm really excited because there's going to be movement regarding homelessness, that the Community should should know more about, but I'm out of time.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

At least quick with that stop too. The so really good question, Senator. Thank you for that. One of the things we found out was folks who have vouchers in hand. These are the Section 8 vouchers. These are folks who are coming out of homelessness in many cases. Yeah, obviously. There's likely not to have a perfect financial track record. So luckily. Our forward thinking housing director Sally Stang, she's the best in the country, by the way. Said OK, went to the landlords, Bob to the table and said what do you need? What's the problem? They created a fund which said if your if you take a risk let's say a homeless veteran who now. The voucher and the let's say they they run out on the rent. We will pay you for that rent part. So they create a fund, basically an insurance program and we've never spent a dime out of it so far like that insurance program brought more landlords to the table, more people who are now accepting our vouchers, just having a voucher in hand doesn't matter if you don't have keys in your hand. Doesn't matter if you don't get to get to actually be housed. So what we did is say, hey, what is stopping people from you actually taking these vouchers? And we found out some of those variables and created programs to actually ensure that people could utilize those vouchers as intended.

Speaker 6

Thank you. So I'm going to go back and forth. I'm going to read a card. How are you going to encourage the community to get involved in affordable housing? And we'll actually go reverse mayor Whipple?

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So I think part of getting the community involved in affordable housing is actually having a more robust understanding of what affordable housing is. I think to some people, they think it it's it's something that that's we don't have here in Wichita you think of. Big housing developments in in other large cities. So

what we've done over the last few years is we actually have these housing conferences. We're Sally staying. It brings in experts from all over the country, brings in our building community, brings in our nonprofit community and brings in landlords to say, come check out some of the opportunities we have here. And by bringing those people in. And having a a, a whole conference about housing, which we've been doing for the last few years now, thanks to her leadership that we've been able to actually kind of close that knowledge gap with what affordable housing is and how more people could. The heart in it. So I think that's one of the ways that we do this is we got to bring people to the table and we have been doing that and it's the right people to the table, not just anyone, but making sure that the people who actually have capacity to take on some of these vouchers capacity actually take on some of the folks who need affordable housing. That they can get the full information of what that is and how it will help them and how they can also help the community.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

You know, one of the things that the mayor said that has a lot of credence is that knowledge gap, those in our community that. Don't understand the concepts. Also need to be at the table so we need to also share that knowledge, not just as A at a housing conference, but rather in general in our Community so that we can have those robust conversations because it will take neighborhoods and many of you live in neighborhoods. And when we have. Topics about affordability and housing and housing in areas where sometimes we've had neighborhoods that say not in my own backyard, we need to have those more robust conversations and we need people at the table. And so despite the fact that that has been happening, you need someone that can help. Lead the effort into helping the community understand the topics. Bring also the community to the table. Connect them with those who are trying to develop and and not pit one against the other. But again, back to the thing that I mentioned earlier and that is if our true core is to try to find solutions. We can find them when we're at the table together, not fighting against each other, but rather saying we both want solutions. How can we get to? A yes.

Speaker 6

All right. We'll go to a question here again, questions not comments, please. Thank you.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

We don't. We have no idea.

Speaker 6

Let's grab this.

Speaker 5

How do you guys feel about reviewing some of the zoning policies that the city of Wichita has? I know, like certainly like. Certain like restrictions and like parking minimums in houses and commercial areas. Restrict the amount of housing we can have in more dense settings. If we have more dense settings, there is more room for more housing that's more affordable to people. How would you feel? What would you plan on doing? What are you planning on doing to you know, address these issues? What have you done in? The past to try to address those specific issues.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So to answer your question, I have not as you know, I'm a first time candidate, so I have not had the opportunity to change zoning or to propose changing zoning. But I can tell you this, when it comes to the topic of making sure that we have more density and we have more options. We do have to start considering what are the zoning regulations that we currently have that impede people from trying to think. More differently about the topic of diversity in housing, and I really do think that people want multiple various types of housing, not just single family. So we need to have again back to those robust conversations because a townhouse is can look fantastic. And it might make more sense when we talked about the 150,000. So how can we get to more conversations with labcd? Some of the neighborhoods in asking them where do those make sense? Can we talk about how? How can we reduce some of that red tape so that it is more attractive to try to invest?

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

It's a really good question and and I I think my opponent and I would agree that zoning usually becomes a barrier when it comes to facing the realities of where we are today. We're we're a growing population, growing economy, growing city. However we one size can't really fit all with this. So you got to have one of the things we balance with the. With the with the city City Council, as it is, is not just the technical zoning changes that come from APC, but also we've been very focused on the character of the neighborhood. So you know, what does the the District Advisory Board say? What are the neighborhood associations say because you have some areas where, you know you want lots to have new housing. As quick as possible, and that housing needs to match the character of the neighborhood. Then you have some areas where they're actually tearing down. Historically relevant homes. And So what do we do in those situations where you know it, tear down a a historical home is not the direction we want to go in those cases as well. So basically I think as we move forward, it's not just rezoning, but also making sure that the people who make those decisions reflect the diversity of our communities. So that as. We move forward, we don't lose our neighborhood character.

Speaker 6

OK, I'm going to go to the cards now. In what ways do you plan to support younger runners pursuing a college education who might not have the experience or ability to work full time? In what ways do you plan to support younger runners pursuing a college education who might not have the experience or ability to work full time?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So one of the two key areas that I mentioned in the past that I'm running on is about strengthening our economy and that's really making sure as the mayor also alluded to, we got to keep our folks here in our community, but we also have to attract new folks to come into Wichita as well. And so when it comes to young professionals. College students. It's about a lot of education and I know that it sounds like a broken record, but it's not a lot of our community does not get a lot of the basic financial literacy that we need to encourage young people to think more long term. And so I know that when my parents. We're trying to pay their mortgage. They would, we would hardly ever get the opportunity to to go out to. Eat, for instance, and so making choices and so reminding people about what our priorities get that financial literacy and help our young people really understand. What is your true final goal? And if it's home ownership at some point, let's let's get you a plan to get there.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So and on the topic and and give me a follow up if I'm missing this question, but on the topic of young people and having the ability to afford to live in a city like Wichita as someone who moved out of state into Wichita 20 years ago, one of the things I had to figure out was how do I find a roommate? And I've been trying to count on my head over here. I think I've had about four roommates. Not count my wife, of course, but we actually. We have, we actually have housing in Wichita that is really geared towards young people towards students and they have independent leases where it's not just two people sign a lease, each person has their own lease to their own room. And I think that we need to encourage more of that and try to steer and and be a way to get that information. Be that path for those opportunities, for those young folks so they can learn not only to live in Wichita, but also how to find a roommate, how to find someones compatible and also you know if if you do it right you're finding not just a roommate but also someone that that your friends with you. Along with and, that's going to also help attract that that next generation of talent from outside Wichita being able to to come into which shot and know so on right off the bat.

Speaker 6

Audience question.

Speaker 7

Mayor Lily Wu. My name is Jay Simon, Wichita TV 7, and my question is in regards to affordable housing with the Wichita Journalism Collaborative. I figured I'd go ahead and read an article from Saint Louis, NPR. This quiz is in regards to. The question all right, and the question is starts with the headline that Saint Louis is selling more than 500 homes for \$1.00 apiece. They started a program which was called the Saint Louis dollar, a house program back in February of 2019. My question is. In regards to this, what is the barriers that is keeping the city from? Selling houses that have been deteriorated for over 5 years, such as cities like this to general public as opposed to sending them back out into the general market at a very low market price, instead of sending them back out at a price. Considering that people have to put renovations into the houses.

Speaker

Thank you.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Yeah, that's a great question. Thank you for asking it because it's a timely question because we finally just started putting some of our housing stock on the market and one of the problems with it is really the federal red tape. I mean, frankly, a lot of these houses are actually under the authority of HUD and you can't just go. And sell them. And if you do, you have restrictions on it, where you have to have it 20 plus years of affordable housing, but once you lose control of it, you know, you don't know if they're gonna turn around and sell it. So we finally worked with with our housing staff, Sally, staying again, the best in the. Country and being able to to find a way so that we can get our housing stock into the hands of people who who need houses and we're not. We're doing it not at a market rate but really as appraised rate, which means these are gonna be some of the cheapest houses out there and we can be purposeful when it comes to who do we who do we sell these to by creating. Pathways more for



affordable housing, so we don't have to sell them to like the top bidder. Instead, we can actually sell them to people who need housing, who live right here in our community. And if we do that right, then not only are we getting that money that comes back and so we can continue our our renovations of the other. We have, but also we're building more opportunities to build that intergenerational wealth because you have a home. So it's something we're working on and something we found a way to move forward with thanks to our. Incredible staff and I gotta stop.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

Jason, I had the opportunity to go to one of those open houses, which was over by Grace Med 21st and Grove area and it's just one of 37 homes in the first batch selling for just under 50,000. Dollars as is and so this is an opportunity for someone to put that RSB, then decide. I might also want to ask for some of those federal dollars that are available that the city has put in place. There's \$5,000,000 worth a maximum of \$40,000. Worth of renovations that you could put into this property, but I understand that. The sale of these homes will help with our homeless situation in our community and because that is one of the top priorities that many Community members have asked us about, the homeless situation is something that we need to invest in and so there is a multi agency center that we need to pay for, which is going to cost. About \$30 million and part of the proceeds of these homes that are for sale will go and pay for this Mac. So as much as I'd like to give things away for basically nothing, we got to invest in other. Parts of our community that need help and so our. Our hope is that people will understand the connection between these homes and the homeless situation in our Community and connect those dots to see that there's some opportunities for someone to renovate these homes, but also how that's helping with the long term goal of helping with homelessness.

Speaker 6

OK, we're going to go. To the card. What do you think about boarding homes? Mother-in-law homes and tiny homes for the community, or basically accessory dwellings.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So I've had a chance to look at some multiple variations of tiny homes and can see them as a value. Again, we need to make sure that neighborhoods get a say of what is it that they want in their neighborhoods. District Advisory Board meetings. Times get contentious when people talk. About dwellings, accessory dwellings, and we understand because you want to keep the integrity of that neighborhood, but we also have to start coming up with some solutions towards this really growing housing crisis that we have. When Sally Stang talks about. 44,000 to 50,000 unit shortage in our community. Even if we start building 1000 this year, it's going to take some time to even put a dent. In that, so we have to start thinking about multiple different ways to look at housing. And so I'm really appreciative of the young person who asked the question about the different options because it's a diversity of housing options that we need to encourage the free market to work.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So I actually love the concept, to be honest. It's you got to do it. Basically case by case until you get it going so that you don't step on the toes of the neighborhood, but out in South Wichita where Chelsea and I got our first home, it's a small two-bedroom house we thought was a castle. We moved in by the way. And so you have babies. But it's on 1/2 acre lot, which means like we have this huge backyard and

my mother is getting to the age where I I would like to have her closer. And if you do it right, you can actually tie in in the same you know in into the same utilities. You can make it in these larger lots. You can make it so that they're nice. And you can bring in. A family who, you know you, you want close to you so they don't have to go live somewhere else. So, but the way to do it again is is going to be, I think, a step by step basis to make sure that we're not falling in those unintended consequences where people are digging their own wells or or digging their own. Outhouses or that type of stuff, where it's not actually living up to what we expect out of a global city. So there is a path forward that and you got to have a mixed approach when it comes to affordable housing. And I think this is one of the. The spokes in the wheel for sure.

Speaker 6

Representative Ford Carr.

Speaker 10

Thank you, Danielle, and thank you Lily and mayor for being here. My question is earlier, we were talking about the importance of bringing the developers to the table with respect to building and creating the affordable housing. We also had some earlier.

Speaker 3

Question. Thank you.

Speaker 10

Conversation about redlining and things of that nature that have taken place in the city in the past. My question is for our small and minority contractors. What would you do to bring those people to the table so that we don't have a spin off of what is nothing more than redlining from the development standpoint versus only bringing those larger developers to the table? What would you do to help bring some of our smaller and minority? Contractors to the table.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

Thank you for that question. I had an opportunity to chat with someone who is a minority remodeler here in our community who told me oftentimes they didn't know about an opportunity till the very last minute. And so we need to do a better job of communicating some of those opportunities. Not just in a passive way, but also there's an opportunity here. We each have social media accounts. We each have our social networks that can help share the message, and I think the best way to share a message is literally word of mouth. And when I show you things like this, if you haven't seen this before, you're getting information for the first time. For others, it's a reiteration of that information. So I. I believe that to engage more of our minority business owners, whether it's them or anyone in our Community that has a desire to be a part of the solution, we need to do a better job of communicating and constantly communicating and utilize the electeds to be part of the sharing. That message with folks.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So one of the problems I think that we've fell into over the last decade or so at the city level is the folks who are at the table, who are developers. They're actually developing single family neighborhoods like homes and in these big neighborhoods, and they are. And there's nothing wrong with that. But that's

only about 30% of the type of housing people utilize. It's 30% of the market. So we gotta bring people. On board, who actually, instead of building full development developments, can actually help when it comes to home repairs. And I think that's going to be the key when it comes to diversifying our application pool for developers is contractors is utilizing contractors who can go in and help people whose houses, usually these low income or these older. Folks who can't repair the house on their own. Can we have a grant program that goes through the Neighborhood Association that identifies these folks, goes out, talks to them and say, hey, we can give you \$5000 to repair your roof and utilize a local contractor for that. I think when we start doing that, you're going to see that opportunity gap closed for too long, though a lot of the conversations been focused about these new developments that. Or you know. On on the outskirts of town. Almost. And that's just 30% of the housing stock or 30% of of House of the market. We got to also to avoid gentrification, you gotta hate on hang on to your current housing stock and not allow them to be dilapidated to the point where people are tearing those down and now you got the new developers coming in just basically creating whole new homes there. You got to also invest in the current housing stock. Current homes and there's a play there to do that with contractors who do this type of repair.

Speaker 6

Going to the card, is there a role for the private sector in creating affordable housing in Wichita through new homes as well as rehabilitation, low cost, affordable entry level homes?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

I think the city of Wichita is doing that job, Assistant city manager Troy Anderson had a whole workshop on this and the different tools that are available right now to try to responsibly incentivize the private sector to be part of the solution. And when you look at the toolbox right now, you have things like IRB and I think. The mayor alluded to. That one of the things that has not been utilized very often is the property tax rebate portion of it. And so that could be an idea that developers could consider. And again, we have to refocus efforts on some of this in filling, right. So we already have the infrastructure within. The city limits think about how to best utilize. The resources we currently. Already have, so I think that there are opportunities. But again I I want to be clear because anytime I bring up the word developer, I want to make sure that people understand the process needs to be transparent. We need to communicate, we need to hold developers accountable if they're going to promise XY and Z they have to deliver. On XY and Z and we need to come back and review, so not after just an approval, but let's make sure that it is being on track and it does come to its final fruition. So I do believe that there is a proper role and I would love to engage more people as part of the solution.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Yeah, really good question. So when we talk about best practices, I kind of chuckle a little bit because usually what we're saying is we're stealing a play from another city. You know, who did this better than than we're doing it and how do we kind of mimic that success? And if you look towards Austin, TX, again, my, my little brother Billy, VP of Construction for happy. Humanity drills me every chance you get gets to. Talk about housing policy in Wichita. We're facing some of the same issues where you got more more people than we do houses and what they do is is they have developers who come to them and say, hey, we want to be a part of the solution with affordable housing. We're going to build 16 units. We want to put aside a few of those for affordable housing. Can we work with habitat? And go through

the whole program that first time ownership home ownership program. But instead of building a habitat house, they get one of the condos or they get one of these these units. So we've seen some really successful stuff when it comes to actually government working alongside nonprofit. That's working alongside developers and I think that part of the reason for this is they get tax credit, they're able to take advantage of some other programs and we should be able to facilitate so that our for profit developers and builders are able to be a part of the solution, but also take advantage of any benefits that might come by being a part of that solution.

Speaker

I don't know what it is.

Speaker 11

Hi I'm a young professional in Wichita looking to live downtown and we've talked about working with investors to build affordable housing. However, most of the local downtown investors currently seem mostly interested in luxury and up upscale developments which are not accessible to young professionals like me who need a place to live. Where I can get to where I need to go. So my question is, what tangible policies or practices would you support to address the issue of investors or landlords being unwilling to help build these more affordable complexes downtown?

Speaker 2 (Wu)

I believe when we focus on those key things that I mentioned earlier, the key core. Functions of local government. There is going to be investment because you see when you feel safe and you see people thriving in in an area, it attracts investment into that area. So with the biomedical center that is coming to downtown Wichita, \$300 million investment 3000 students. Will be just at that facility itself. It's going to already have a transformational type of attitude towards that downtown core. So I believe that when we're thinking about right now, especially in the immediate need that we have is really correcting the crime, because if I have young ladies. Who are afraid to walk from downtown Wichita to Old Town when it gets dark, then we're not going to continue attracting more young people to come downtown. So instead we need to correct the crime situation. That's why public safety has to be the number one concern that we focus on. And let local government focus on that effort and then let the markets work on what they're supposed to do and that is respond to the demand that people have in our Community. And if it is housing demand, will will be able to be supplied by the free market.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

So really great question. Time and time again, we have been shown that the only way to reduce housing costs and really inflation is to add more Subs. High and that supply is really at all levels. So we're not just building low income housing, we're not lowering our standards, but really middle housing as well and to kind of highlight this a little more and why we want to take advantage of, you know, federal programs for example that turn some of our older buildings, they have tax credits to turn those into. Housing the reason why we want that is because again, when Chelsea and I bought our two-bedroom house, it was a castle for us at the moment and you got 3 little boys you got to move into a bigger house, which we did well, that house is still there. That house is still there and now it's afford more affordable housing for someone else. And then once our kids graduate college, I don't want them coming back. So I'm going to be moving into hopefully A2 bedroom place somewhere where Chelsea and I go walk to have date

nights, right? So that's gonna open up our family house for that next family who's in the same space of life that we were in where we bought that. So really throwing a supply at it is how we lower this and we can't be too picky. I think about what that supply is because we've shown. That when you have more housing opportunities, the cost goes down across the board.

Speaker 6

So we'll actually take our last question from one of our homeowners.

Speaker

Thank you.

Speaker 8

Homeowners would be good evening. My question is, what can you tell me? Since the overflow winter shelter has closed or is not reopening, what can you tell me what's happening with that? Or what is the new thing that's happening? What will you tell me?

Speaker 6

So the question is around winter shelter and what's happening with that. One minute cause I know I want to respect. You all the time so.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

No, right. And this is a very important issue. We will not let people freeze to death in the streets of Wichita. We absolutely, 100% will not. I don't care if I have to open City Hall up and serve people coffee. Myself now as we move forward though, one of the reasons why we can't depend fully on just the nonprofit sector is because we actually have seen some nonprofits that have had some financial difficulties and not be able to be able to do the services they've done in the past. So we have a role to play. Now. I was on a zoom call yesterday with our folks. Over at humankind and they laid out what they can do and this is what they're gonna be able to do and what we have to do is acknowledge that they're going to be. We need to come up alongside them and fill in that gap and that is 100% what we're going to do as a City Council and we have money and we have the political will to get that done. But again, you got to have that that blended approach because if you just say, oh, nonprofits going to take care of it, these folks who are on the streets, who are homeless, they're which it's ends. Alright, we it is our job. We wanna talk about public safety. I wanna make sure their children aren't freezing to death on the streets. And that is a part of keeping people safe is making sure they got a place to go when the weather is too cold for them to be able to be outside. So I can't give you too many details. It's in flux right now, but I can tell you we're working on it. And again we we finally figured out exactly what the nonprofits are gonna be able to do. So we know what we need to do to move forward, but we're still working out those details.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

So specifically that overflow or the emergency winter shelter is for men. And so let's let's be clear that that is something that humankind ministries has been raising its voice about for a while. And it's just now coming to the forefront, and that is. That's the problem of leadership, because this has been an issue since day one and the homeless task force meeting has been meeting here in this room since

January and humankind has been talking about this need. For a while. And with winter just a month away and we're just now talking about a solution that's a problem and I'd like to say that it does require us to be focused on. The key issues. I know that there are multiple wants in our community, multiple things that we want to have, but there are some critical needs that we need to focus on and those are prior. And homelessness, we have to focus on that. And I can tell you that I've been very grateful that I've been on the outskirts, not at the table, because I'm not one of the invited individuals, but just as a Community member, which means, as someone who is part of this community, you all can be at the table too in that same room. And I encourage us all to continue finding solutions to our to our wichitans and our and our people in our community who are facing homelessness. But I really do believe that it requires leadership that needs to be at the table. And as a quick little reminder, it is an open meeting. It's an open meeting. So that means including City Council members and the mayor are able to come to these meetings.

Speaker 6

So that was. Our last question, I'm sorry from the audience, we want to be respectful of the time. I want to pause because I want to make sure that we wrap up I. Thank you so much they.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

Wait for me afterwards and I'll. I'll talk to you for sure. Give you more of the information. Sorry, we're gonna do so much in that 30 seconds or a minute. So. But wait, any any question that we said, by the way, I'm sure my my opponent and I would be happy.

Speaker 6

Will be able to respond after. Thank you. Right.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

To stay and to expand on any answer because I have a number of questions right here that we did not.

Speaker 6

Get to. So my apologies, but what we will do is type them up, get them over to our candidates so that hopefully they have the opportunity to respond to those and we can put those back out there. So we're gonna actually give you both one minute. Just give your final thoughts and wrap up.

Speaker

Go ahead.

Speaker 2 (Wu)

But again, I want everyone to have a reminder that we're only one person on a City Council of seven, and that it will require good collaboration and consensus building amongst more council members in order to move anything forward. So I really highly encourage people. To be part of the conversation. Help. Elevate the priorities in our community and as have been hearing again in our Community, the top priorities are on public safety, on growing this economy, on restoring trust and building Community. And I'm just really grateful to live in a community where my parents were able to realize the American dream

and I want. For people to realize their American dreams, and I want our community to be that best place to truly live, work and raise a family in a place that is affordable for all.

Speaker 4 (Whipple)

First, I want to thank everyone for being here. I also want to give a shout out to our staff. They we've been working on homelessness and homelessness prevention for years now, thanks to taking advantage of some of the federal funds that we've had, we were actually able to invest more in homelessness and homelessness prevention over the last few years. And last 20 years combined. We're the only state that actually allocated our own Cares Act and ARPA act funds for folks to prevent evictions. And that's again a tip of the hat to our staff, to people wake up every single day. With the perspective of what can we do to make Wichita better? It's not the electeds, it's, it's the staff and the elections. Of course we support them, but one of the things that elected officials do is sometimes they think they're smarter the day after they're elected. And you know, we also have to eat a little humble pie when in a room with these experts. So thank you to our staff. Some of them are in the room, you know, as we move forward, this is an issue that we have to. Continue to press because you can't have. Have a A, a booming economy and you can't have a really a safe community without housing and without making sure that folks have access to that housing and homelessness is part of that as well. And it's very complex. But again, I love that we had a forum where we can actually dive into these issues that is over this particular topic. I look forward to answering your questions and talk with you afterwards. And yeah, Valerie, I see you. Thank.

Speaker 6

You let's give our candidates a round. Of applause, please. We thank them both for being here this evening. I also want to thank the Wichita Journalism Collaborative for helping us see this dream out and the advocacy team that put this forth. We're grateful to be able to have partnerships, so a round of applause for them as well. Thank you all. Please stop at the tables in the back to learn about both organizations and there are a number of amazing organizations in the room, so please continue to connect and if you would like to follow up with any questions, you can have a good night. Thank you.