

2024

Annual Report





FROM THE DESK OF

Robert C. White, Jr.

Councilmember At-Large • Council of the District of Columbia

Dear Neighbors,

As I reflect on 2024, I'm proud of our progress in building a stronger, safer, and more equitable DC. As Housing Committee chair, I achieved significant reforms at the DC Housing Authority, protected vital programs like emergency rental assistance and SNAP, and expanded housing access for low-income residents.

I've also tackled public safety head-on through legislation to improve our 911 system, preventing youth violence through mentorship and vocational training, and enhancing support for crime victims.

Looking ahead to 2025, I remain committed to ensuring safe, affordable housing and protecting our city's most vulnerable residents. Thank you for your partnership in making DC better for all of us.

Sincerely,

Robert White



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Report design by Aimee Custis.



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Housing & Human Services

As chair of the Housing Committee, I oversee public housing and vouchers in the District as well as human services. I'm proud to share the ways my team and I held agencies accountable, fought for crucial funding, and delivered real results for DC residents.

In 2024, the committee continued our work to reform the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), driving changes to make the agency more accountable, transparent, and responsive to residents' needs. We blocked the mayor's mid-year attempts to divert or reduce funding for critical safety net programs like emergency rental assistance (ERAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). I also fought to make sure residents dreaming of becoming first time homeowners could access Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP) funding after the mayor changed the requirements to qualify in the middle of the process for people applying.



D.C. Council seeks to undo changes that hurt first-time homebuyers

Meagan Flynn • Washington Post

After D.C. housing officials abruptly changed the rules of a cash-strapped program for first-time homeowners this fall, the D.C. Council voted Tuesday to try to restore opportunities for an untold number of lower-income residents who were effectively barred from the program under the new criteria.

Reforming the DC Housing Authority

DCHA executive director: My work to bring on a permanent DCHA executive director who has deep experience in public housing administration is beginning to turn the tide with the appointment of Director Keith Pettigrew. I've seen more transparency and better

Part of my oversight of the DC Housing Authority has been pushing to get more units repaired and made habitable more quickly. With so many residents desperately needing housing, DC shouldn't have so many vacant units in our housing stock. Over the past year, DCHA reported 5,443 leased units in December 2023 and 5,666 in October 2024, a 4% increase in 10 months. That is 223 more units of housing available to DC residents!

results through my committee's monthly oversight on key issues, like the time it takes DCHA to respond to residents' maintenance requests and how many vacant units they repair so people can live in them again.

DCHA oversight: In October, I held my sixth oversight hearing diving into DCHA's performance since I took over the Housing Committee. For the first time, public housing residents reported that they have faith in DCHA leadership and believe the agency is headed in a better direction. I'm going to keep pushing DCHA to help residents get into housing faster, to commit to stronger tenant protections, and much more.

Funding for repairs: During budget season this year, I increased funding for public housing repairs and maintenance, allocating over \$7 million for fiscal year 2025.

Fighting cuts to crucial safety net programs

SNAP increases: In January, I joined fellow Councilmembers in pushing back on the mayor's attempt to disregard the law by refusing to increase SNAP benefits for residents. I was glad to see the mayor release the funding for SNAP at long last, but it should not have taken the threat of a lawsuit for her to follow the law, and the delay hurt residents already struggling to put food on the table.



'Mayor is de-prioritizing social safety net programs' | DC Council may sue Bowser for refusing to fund SNAP increases

Delia Goncalves • WUSA 9

The fight to fund food assistance for thousands of D.C. families may be heading to court. For the first time in a decade, the DC Council is considering suing Mayor Muriel Bowser for her refusal to fund the program.

Rent assistance: In this year's budget process, my committee team and I also found funding to increase what the mayor initially proposed for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) budget by \$6.7 million, bringing the total to \$26.7 million. As chair of the Housing Committee, I listened to perspectives from from people on both sides of the affordable housing crisis: residents in crisis who cannot afford to pay their rent, and small landlords who are at risk of losing their buildings because they're not receiving rent payments and cannot pay their monthly mortgage.

In October, I worked with Chairman Mendelson on ERAP reform, which culminated in emergency legislation that the Council passed. My amendment to this bill, which made it more balanced and responsive to the needs of both tenants and landlords, passed unanimously.

Support for renters and homeowners, and creating and preserving affordable housing

First-time homebuyer assistance: For aspiring homeowners, I added \$2 million to HPAP to help first-time homebuyers purchase their dream homes. I fought back when the mayor changed the rules in the middle

of the game and said that lower-income residents previously approved for HPAP no longer qualified. I led the Council to unanimously pass an emergency bill to allow these residents back into the program.

Pet rent: I introduced the Pets in Housing Act to reduce exorbitant fees that are barriers for many Washingtonians searching for affordable housing.

Funding affordable housing: I added \$20 million more to the Housing Production Trust Fund and \$4.5 million to the Housing Preservation Fund, ensuring that we continue to build and maintain DC's affordable housing stock.



Councilmember White meeting with Krish, a DC resident who was able to purchase his first home thanks to our Home Purchase Assistance Program advocacy.

Envisioning the future of Downtown DC

I held a hearing on the future of Downtown DC, which focused on bringing mixed income housing downtown, transforming unused office space into new arts, culture, and university spaces, and the tools the DC government and developers need to make this transition happen successfully. I have been working to bring more housing downtown since 2016.

Working to end homelessness and support unhoused residents

Street outreach: I increased funding in the budget for street outreach to homeless residents by \$1.5 million, which provides vital resources like blankets, food, and water, and referrals for medical care, mental health support, and housing.

Resources for homelessness prevention and domestic violence survivors: In addition, I secured more resources for homelessness prevention programs and increased support for domestic violence survivors, who are disproportionately impacted by housing instability.

Returning citizens: We secured funding for housing programs that help residents coming out of incarceration.

New housing vouchers: I obtained funding for hundreds of new housing vouchers, overriding the mayor's initial proposal of zero new housing vouchers.

Rapid rehousing: I also focused on reforming rapid rehousing, a one-year program that hasn't achieved its goal of helping families achieve stability after leaving

homeless shelters. This summer, the mayor threatened to evict families who'd been in the program for longer than a year. I advocated for them to receive housing vouchers instead of falling back into homelessness. I remain committed to transforming the program to create real pathways to long-term housing stability.



Participating in the 2024 Point in Time Homeless Count to speak with unhoused DC residents and document their experiences.



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public Safety Initiatives

Public safety requires a holistic and coordinated effort. This year I built on my Whole Government Response to Crime Act of 2024, which takes a comprehensive approach to addressing gun violence, supporting victims, and improving city services, and introduced a series of bills designed to curb the spike in youth crime.

Youth crime prevention: My Safer Today, Safer Tomorrow youth crime prevention package, introduced in February 2024, includes the following bills:

- Vocational Education for a New Generation Act



DC Council considers massive mentorship program in an effort to curb youth crime

Rafael Sanchez-Cruz • WUSA 9

At-Large Councilmember Robert White has introduced the proposal as a part of a legislative package focused on jobs, truancy, and mentorship.

- Youth Mentorship Through Community Engagement Act
- Truancy Reduction for Student Success Act.

I also successfully advocated for three measures from my Whole Government Response to Crime Act to be included in the Council’s comprehensive Secure DC crime bill:

- **Requiring a firearm tracing data report** to track the sources of guns used in crimes so we can stop the flow of firearms into the District.
- Establishing a **Victim Services Coordinator** within the Office of Victim Services and launching a public awareness campaign about the resources available to crime victims.
- Creating an **Emerging Adult Services Director** to coordinate programs aimed at reducing crime

among young adults, ensuring our city has a comprehensive strategy to address this age group’s specific challenges.




KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS *Budget Reforms*

This year, when the mayor proposed a huge budget but said the city didn’t have enough money for important programs like affordable housing, I had a question. Why are we raising taxes before making sure we’re spending our current money carefully?

That’s why I worked to create Budget Accountability Reforms. These reforms focus on three main goals: finding ways to save money, making sure city agencies do their job, and making the budget process transparent and clear. The reforms I proposed this year include:

- **Financial Performance Review**, which would conduct a deep review of the District’s spending and agency effectiveness. Leaders in other states, such as Delaware and Pennsylvania, have conducted similar reviews and found hundreds of millions of dollars in savings. I’m confident that we can do the same in DC.

- **Budget stress testing** and assessing and analyzing the long-term sustainability of our revenue and spending projections that will put the District on a sustainable financial path.
- **Sunset Advisory Committee**, which will conduct ongoing reviews of government agencies and end programs that are no longer necessary or productive.
- **Expanding the Council Budget Office** to enhance oversight and inform Council decision-making.

I’m proud to say that the Fiscal Year 2025 budget expands the budget office by two full-time employees, who will begin laying the groundwork for the budget reforms I proposed. By doing the hard work now, we can avoid the annual cycle of difficult choices—whether to cut vital programs or raise taxes—and instead focus on delivering results for the people of Washington, DC.



Community Engagement

Listening to your needs and working together to find answers is how we get to the root of issues and solve problems. In the past year, my team and I have gotten creative about meeting residents where you are by participating in resident-led events like Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) meetings, neighborhood meet-ups, community festivals, and senior center visits. I also held Community Office Hours at libraries in each Ward where residents met with me to raise the issues on their minds.

- Held regular Community Office Hours at libraries in every Ward.
- Shared surveys for residents' feedback on their support from my office, and feedback on the DC Housing Authority.
- Attended ANC meetings and neighborhood events.
- Hosted youth violence prevention discussions.



Top to bottom: Councilmember White participating in an ANC public safety meeting; Girl Scouts visiting Councilmember White's office to earn their Democracy badge; Councilmember White at his Back to School BBQ and School Supply Drive in Ward 8.



Resources

Emergency Services: 911

City Services: 311 or 311.dc.gov

Office of Councilmember Robert White

If you have feedback, or requests for constituent services, contact my office by phone at (202) 724-8174.

For housing concerns specifically, email my Housing Committee staff at housing@dccouncil.gov or call (202) 727-8270.

DC Housing Authority: (202) 535-1000

To make an appointment for assistance with DCHA visit bit.ly/DCHA_Appointment

SNAP Benefits: (202) 727-5355

To apply, visit districtdirect.dc.gov/ua/

Utility Assistance: (202) 535-2600

To apply, visit doee.dc.gov/liheap

Mental Health Support:

- DC Mental Health Hotline: 1 (888) 793-4357
- National Crisis Lifeline: 988



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