

Margaret Rog

Candidate for: St. Louis Park City Council, Ward 1

How long have you lived in your community?

29 years

Please list any notable supporters or groups of supporters for your campaign

DFL (through their resolution of support) Former council member Thom Miller, now on the Housing Authority in SLP and a Realtor himself My current council colleagues, who have donated to my campaign I don't have a challenger so have not sought endorsements per se. I have been focused on taking advantage of election season to connect with voters about what they'd like to see during my second (and final) term. One more tidbit: I've been invited to interview with the Sierra Club after completing their (very lengthy!) questionnaire.

What are the most important housing challenges facing your community?

We have a lot of market rate rental apartments coming online, particularly near SWLRT, and I don't think that's where our greatest need lies as a community. Like everyone we need more affordable places for low- and moderate-income individuals and families - and my own focus is on ownership over renting as a way for people to build wealth. I am currently exploring options for our community to slow down the purchase of modestly priced homes to investment companies who turn them into rentals. This takes "entry-level" homes off the market and creates situations in neighborhoods where there are sometimes more renters than owners. I'm a big advocate for homeownership. Not biased against renters, just believe ownership is a better option for many people who currently don't see that option for themselves in our community. Not just SF homes but townhomes & for sale condos - we need more of those. We also need more attractive senior housing options for people ready to move out of their homes who want to stay in the community but don't see good options. Other challenges are around demo/new home construction and the negative impacts on nearby properties and the aesthetics of a street. I hear a good deal about that from residents of my ward.

The Twin Cities Metro is facing a housing shortage unlike any we have experienced in recent history. What will you do to increase the number of homes available to residents of your community?

I'm currently working with staff on a row house-type development in my ward, where we purchased four substandard homes, to deconstruct and make way for the row homes. The project is early in its development and is a partnership with the MHCA and Homes within Reach. I'd like to see more of these low-density multi-family ownership opportunities in our community to meet a need. I also believe we can and should partner more with nonprofits like PPL and CommonBond to create all-affordable developments that serve people down to 30% AMI (as well as higher, within the same development). We have a couple of those in the wings that are awaiting tax credits from the Legislature before moving forward. I'm in support. I also support the increased density around the future SWLRT stations but as noted earlier have concerns about the ratio of market rate to affordable apartments given that the people who most need to be near transit are often lower income and without cars. We are seeing hundreds of apartments come online near the future Beltline Station which will significantly increase the number of homes for residents. We don't have much space for SF housing - we are pretty much a fully built out community.

REALTORS® hold Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as core values. Please describe how you view the importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in your role as an elected official.

It's at the forefront. I and my colleagues have requested and receive information on the racial equity impacts of most of our investments and policy decisions - from street repair to elections staff to climate investments to policing. We discuss the unintended consequences of our decisions, with a focus on how communities of color might be impacted. We have recently asked staff to provide options for requiring developers receiving TIF to

meet certain diversity goals. I have been a driver of several programs and policies designed to improve the lives of BIPOC people living in our community or who wish to live here.

Minnesota has one of the largest homeownership gaps between Whites and Blacks, Indigenous, and People of Color. This is one of MAR's primary concerns. What would you propose at the local level to close this homeownership gap?

See above - I have been talking about this issue since before I was even considering a run for city council (4 years ago) and was pleased when my focus on this issue recently resulted in unanimous council approval for a program designed to better integrate our SF neighborhoods and, most importantly, provide opportunities for individuals and families of color, with a focus on Black individuals and families, the same wealth-building opportunities many whites have enjoyed due to historic government and private policies and practices. The deferred loan program, which will provide up to \$75,000 financial assistance to assist in purchasing a home, will come online this fall. Stay tuned!

How do you think the city can best balance the rights of tenants and property owners to effectively manage rental housing?

Great question. I don't know all the answers. I think open communication is important. I think our current policy to at least provide a buffer for residents displaced when property owners decide to upgrade and increase the rent, have to move. We have instituted a 1-for-1 replacement policy when NOAH properties are destroyed to make way for new housing. I think the key is to stay in touch with both "sides" and work to address issues locally as they arise.

What are your views on property tax rates in your community? Do you have concerns related to the city's property tax rate? If so, how would you address those concerns once elected?

Four years into serving, I'm still working to figure out where I stand on keeping taxes as low as possible versus all the things we want to do as a city and how to fund them. My MO in the past and currently is to find out as much as possible about what taxpayers are being asked to pay for, communicating that to them, trying to gauge support for those investments, comparing them against our strategic priorities, and more. I do think that modest increases are okay and am ready to explain and defend them. I think optimal increases are around the 4.5% range given our 3% staff salary increases, our important climate investments, our desire to create more sidewalks and trails (expensive), etc.

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