



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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WENDELL FELDER
Ward 7 Councilmember

Chairperson
Subcommittee on Local Business
Development

Dear Mayor Bowser,

As you prepare the District's FY 2027 budget, I am sharing priorities shaped directly by the voices of Ward 7 residents. Ward 7 is a proud and growing community with tremendous potential, yet many families still face long-standing disparities in investment, infrastructure, and access to opportunity. The FY27 budget is an opportunity to make targeted investments that strengthen neighborhoods, expand economic opportunities, and improve quality of life across the ward.

Over the past several months, our office engaged residents through a Ward 7 budget survey, letters from community-based organizations, resolutions from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and a Ward 7 Budget Town Hall. Residents, small businesses, and community leaders shared clear priorities for the investments needed to strengthen our neighborhoods and ensure Ward 7 benefits from the District's continued growth.

Residents emphasized the need for thriving commercial corridors, quality schools, reliable transportation, safe neighborhoods, and healthy environments. Strategic investments in economic development, workforce training, housing stability, youth opportunity, public safety, and community infrastructure will help ensure Ward 7 residents can fully share in the District's prosperity.

Ward 7 is also at a pivotal moment. The redevelopment of the RFK campus and new growth along Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road present a unique opportunity to drive inclusive economic development east of the river. At the same time, continued investments in education, youth programming, recreation, and neighborhood conditions remain essential to supporting families and strengthening community stability.

The attached priorities reflect the feedback we received and outline targeted investments to revitalize commercial corridors, support small businesses, expand youth and workforce opportunities, strengthen housing stability, and help seniors age safely in place. They prioritize improving transportation connectivity, protecting Ward 7's natural resources, and preserving the cultural and historic assets that define our community. Even within current fiscal constraints, focusing on these investments will make a meaningful difference for Ward 7 residents.

I look forward to working with your administration to ensure the FY 2027 budget reflects these priorities and continues moving Ward 7, and the District, forward.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendell Felder".

Councilmember Wendell Felder

Economic Development

Ward 7 residents deserve access to vibrant commercial corridors, neighborhood-serving retail, and catalytic development that creates jobs and strengthens the tax base. Strategic investments will revitalize commercial corridors, attract grocery stores and essential amenities, and support mixed-use development to expand housing and economic activity in the Ward.

1. **Continue funding to support the timely completion of key economic development projects** across the Ward such as **Fletcher Johnson at the Park, Hill East (Phase II), Parkside, Capitol Gateway, and Skyland Town Center**.
2. **Grocery Incentive Fund (\$3 million):** This funding would prioritize efforts to attract and develop full-service grocery stores within the Ward to improve food access and address longstanding gaps.
3. **Northeast Heights Tax Increment Financing (TIF) (\$30 million):** Investment in the Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road corridor will advance a catalytic mixed-use development that expands housing, retail opportunities, and the Ward's tax base while generating long-term employment.
4. **Eastern Branch Boys and Girls Club (\$1.2 million):** This funding will jump-start the redevelopment of the site and enhance community-serving space in the Hill East Community.

Stabilization of Commercial Corridors

Ward 7's commercial corridors—including Pennsylvania Avenue, Minnesota Avenue, Benning Road, Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue, and Alabama Avenue (Skyland) require strategic investments to attract and retain businesses, improve storefronts, and increase foot traffic.

1. **Ward 7 Business Improvement District (BID) Feasibility Study (\$300,000):** Ward 7 is the only Ward in the District that does not have a BID. A feasibility study will evaluate market conditions and identify pathways to establish a sustainable BID model to support corridor maintenance, safety, and economic growth.
2. **Establish Benning Road Main Street (\$175,000):** Fund a Benning Road (from 42nd St. NE to 46th St. SE) Main Street to help strengthen local businesses, improve storefront conditions/facade, and stimulate neighborhood economic activity.
3. **Small Area Plans (\$400,000):** Fund the development of small area plans for Marshall Heights, Parkside, Minnesota Avenue, and Kingman Park to identify economically viable development opportunities and guide future investment.
4. **Main Streets Program (\$7.5 million):** Maintain a consistent base funding level for all Main Streets while allocating additional resources based on corridor-specific needs.
5. **Business Security Pilot Program:** This program will provide funding for businesses to hire security personnel to deter crime, create a safer environment for staff and customers, and enable faster response times should incidents occur.
6. **Reestablish the Storefront Facade Improvement Program:** Restore funding for the program and place it under DSLBD to help small businesses upgrade and maintain their storefronts, creating more attractive and welcoming commercial corridors.

Workforce Development and Job Creation

Ward 7's unemployment rate ranges between 8% and 11% compared to a 5% citywide average. Ward 7 residents must have access to quality employment opportunities that provide pathways to economic mobility. Investments in workforce training, apprenticeships, and career-connected education will help residents access good-paying jobs and ensure they benefit from major development projects occurring across the District.

- 1. IT Workforce Training Hub (\$2 million):** Establish a technology workforce training hub that equips Ward 7 residents with in-demand digital and technical skills.
- 2. Expand Apprenticeship and Workforce Development Programs:** Increase funding for programs that create pathways for residents to gain in-demand skills, connect with employers, and build long-term economic stability in high-demand industries.
- 3. Maintain funding for DSLBD's Aspire and Dream Pitch Programs:** Maintain existing funding levels for these programs to provide historically underserved populations and neighborhoods with greater opportunities for growth and development.

Small Business Development

Small businesses are the backbone of Ward 7's local economy. Targeted investments in entrepreneurship, technical assistance, and capital access will help stabilize existing businesses, support new startups, and expand opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

- 1. Small Business Development Center (\$600,000):** Establish a dedicated center in Ward 7 to provide technical assistance, mentorship, business planning support, and contracting readiness services.
- 2. Commercial Relief Fund:** Create a Commercial Relief Fund to support small businesses experiencing financial challenges and help them stabilize operations, retain employees, and remain anchors in their communities.
- 3. Ward 7 Community Investment Fund (\$1.5 million):** Establish a grant-secured loan program to support local entrepreneurs, stabilize commercial corridors, and expand small business growth.
- 4. Maintain Commercial Property Acquisition Fund:** Maintain funding for the Commercial Property Acquisition Fund (CPAF) to support small businesses seeking to purchase commercial property.

RFK

The redevelopment of the RFK campus represents one of the largest economic opportunities for Ward 7 in generations. Strategic investments are needed to ensure that residents and local businesses benefit from the jobs, contracts, and economic growth generated by this project.

- 1. Ward 7 Builds Initiative (\$1.25 million):** Fund the initiative to coordinate business development services, workforce training and employment placement, and youth development opportunities to ensure Ward 7 residents can benefit from major development projects, including the RFK redevelopment.

2. **RFK Sportsplex:** Continue to fund and support the creation of a Sportsplex at the RFK Stadium Campus. This would expand access to recreational space and create new opportunities for youth sports, community programming, and regional events.

Education and Youth Opportunity

Ward 7 students deserve equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities and modern facilities. Investments in education, literacy, early childhood development, and youth programming will help close opportunity gaps and support long-term success.

1. **School Facility Repairs and Athletic Improvements:** There are hundreds of open work orders, including 79 at Eastern High School, for school facilities in Ward 7. Allocating funding to address critical facility repairs and athletic upgrades will improve learning environments, student health, and school engagement.
2. **Fund Modernization of Schools:** Provide funding to modernize Sousa MS, Kelly Miller MS, and Eastern HS, while continuing modernization at J.C. Nalle ES, Thomas ES, Burrville ES, Drew ES, and Anne Beers ES to ensure students learn in safe, modern facilities.
3. **Winston Education Campus (\$60 million):** Invest \$60 million to modernize the campus into a specialized school, such as a language immersion or Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.
4. **Increase Funding for School-Based Behavioral Health:** Expand funding for DBH's School-Based Behavioral Health Program to ensure every public school has a behavioral health provider and that students receive the mental health support needed.
5. **Ward 7 Youth Mentorship Programming (\$500,000):** Allocate \$500,000 to establish structured mentorship programs that support academic success, leadership development, and positive youth outcomes for Ward 7 students.
6. **Literacy Programming:** Expand literacy initiatives by fully funding OSSE's Early Literacy Taskforce recommendations and supporting community organizations that provide literacy services.
7. **High Impact Tutoring (\$3 million):** Continue and fully fund OSSE's High Impact Tutoring program to close achievement gaps and improve academic outcomes for students across the District.
8. **High-Quality Early Childhood Education (\$10 million):** Allocate \$10 million to maintain access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education and strengthen school readiness for District children.
9. **DC Child Care Subsidy Program, Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, and PKEEP:** Maintain funding for these early childhood programs to support working families, strengthen the early education workforce, and ensure children enter school prepared to learn.
10. **Educator Retention:** Invest in educator retention strategies and incentives for schools experiencing high turnover, particularly for critical roles such as Special Education and Career and Technical Education teachers

Neighborhood Conditions, Beautification, and Public Spaces

Clean, safe, and well-maintained neighborhoods are critical to the quality of life of residents. Ward 7 has significant open space assets, but many require better maintenance, activation, and stewardship to ensure they serve residents effectively.

Maximizing the Use of Open Spaces

1. **O Street Wall (\$1 million):** Allocate \$1 million to acquire the parcel of land beneath the O Street Wall and transform it into a community park and walking trail, creating accessible green space, enhancing neighborhood connectivity, and providing residents with a safe area for recreation and outdoor activity.
2. **Activate the 16th/North Carolina/C Street NE Pocket Park (\$200k):** This project will activate a central public space, creating a hub for social and cultural activities and improving local community engagement.

Keeping Ward 7 Clean

1. **Clean Team Expansion (\$375,000):** Expand the Clean Team to cover major corridors in the Ward such as Alabama Avenue and Eastern Avenue, to improve neighborhood conditions, support small businesses, and enhance public safety.
2. **Roving Clean Team Continuation & Expansion (\$300,000):** Expand the Clean Team to address illegal dumping and sanitation needs in areas such as Southern Avenue that are not covered by corridor programs.
3. **Increase Public Litter Cans:** Expand the number of public trash receptacles in high-traffic areas and green spaces in Ward 7 to help reduce litter, improve sanitation, and encourage responsible waste disposal.
4. **Expand MPD's Environmental Crimes Unit:** Increased funding for investigative and enforcement activities will strengthen the District's ability to deter illegal dumping and hold violators accountable.
5. **Expand the Helping Hands Program:** Increase funding to expand the program, incorporating youth employment opportunities, and providing mini-grants to community-based organizations to support neighborhood cleanup efforts.
6. **Increase Funding to DPW's Solid Waste Management (\$5 million):** Allocate additional funding to hire more inspectors and sanitation crews, improve litter and debris removal, and invest in the equipment needed to maintain cleaner neighborhoods across the District.

Investing in Ward 7's History and Heritage

Ward 7 has a rich cultural and historical legacy that is deeply rooted in the District's history. Preserving and celebrating these assets strengthens community identity, fosters neighborhood pride, and creates opportunities for cultural tourism and civic engagement. Strategic investments will help elevate Ward 7's history, support cultural traditions, and enhance the visibility of the communities that have shaped the Ward.

1. **Historic Preservation Plan Implementation—Ward 7 Focus:** Allocate funding to support implementation of the District’s Historic Preservation Plan with targeted investments in Ward 7 to identify, document, and protect historic and culturally significant sites.
2. **Neighborhood Signage (\$500,000):** Allocate additional funding to install neighborhood signage throughout Ward 7 to highlight community identity, strengthen neighborhood branding, and celebrate the history of local communities such as Marshall Heights, Penn Branch, and Deanwood.
3. **Support Cultural Events:** Establish a fund to support signature cultural events, such as parades and other community engagement celebrations, that bring residents together and honor Ward 7’s cultural heritage.
4. **Preservation of Woodlawn Cemetery (\$150,000):** Invest in preservation and maintenance efforts at Woodlawn Cemetery, a historically significant site that reflects the rich history and legacy of the Ward 7 community.
5. **Public Art Installations:** Continue funding public art initiatives that bring murals, sculptures, and creative installations to public spaces, celebrating local culture while beautifying neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Revitalizing Vacant and Blighted Properties

Ward 7 has one of the highest concentrations of vacant and blighted properties in the District. Addressing these properties is essential to improving neighborhood safety, stabilizing housing markets, and supporting community revitalization.

1. **Increase DOB’s Abatement Fund (\$3 million):** Allocate \$3 million to expand DOB’s Abatement Fund so hazardous housing violations can be addressed more quickly, particularly in wards with the greatest need, such as Ward 7.
2. **Strengthen DOB Enforcement with Additional Inspectors:** Fill vacant DOB inspector positions to improve response times, strengthen oversight of construction and property maintenance, and ensure consistent enforcement of building codes.
3. **Expand DHCD’s Property Acquisition and Disposition Division:** Expand DHCD’s PADD to accelerate the acquisition, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties, returning them to productive use and stabilizing neighborhoods in Ward 7.

Protecting our Natural Resources

Ward 7 is home to some of the District’s most valuable natural assets, including parks, trails, and the Anacostia River. Protecting these resources and ensuring proper maintenance will improve environmental quality and expand recreational opportunities.

1. **Anacostia River Cleanup Fund:** Maintain and strengthen investments in this fund to support ongoing restoration, conservation, and protection of the Anacostia River, while improving environmental health in surrounding neighborhoods.
2. **Establish Green Teams through DOEE’s Green Pathways Division:** Create Ward 7 Green Teams through DOEE’s Green Pathways Division to maintain green spaces while providing residents with training and employment pathways in environmental careers.

3. **RiverSmart Homes Program:** Maintain funding to help homeowners manage stormwater, reduce energy use and air pollution, and strengthen sustainability and climate resilience.
4. **Restore Funding for Solar for All Program (\$3 million):** Restore \$3 million in funding for the Solar for All program so low- and moderate-income residents can access affordable clean energy and reduce household utility costs.
5. **Kingman and Heritage Island Preservation:** Continue investments through DOEE to preserve Kingman and Heritage Islands by advancing wetland restoration, expanding the Kingman Rangers program, and developing an education center to enhance environmental stewardship and public use.

Supporting Positive Youth Development

Supporting positive youth development ensures that young people have access to safe and enriching opportunities outside of the classroom. Providing safe spaces, structured activities, and mentorship allows youth to build skills, stay engaged, and develop a sense of belonging in their communities. Investing in these opportunities not only benefits youth but also strengthens neighborhoods and the District as a whole.

1. **Increase the Minimum Wage for MBSYEP:** Raise the minimum wage for participants in the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program to attract older youth, expand participation, and ensure the program remains competitive with other employment opportunities.
2. **Out-of-School Time Programming (\$3.1 million):** Allocate \$3.1 million to expand after-school and summer programming through DCPS, OSSE, and Learn24 to increase access for students, particularly in Ward 7, and provide safe, structured learning environments.
3. **GoGo Education and Workforce Development Initiative (\$200,000):** Invest \$200,000 to support career-connected learning at HD Woodson High School, providing Ward 7 students with workforce exposure and skill development.
4. **Recreational Programming and Extended Hours:** Expand recreation center hours and programming to give youth greater access to safe spaces, structured activities, and mentorship outside school hours.
5. **Expanding Support for Families (\$2.5 million):** Increase funding for Healthy Families Thriving Communities Collaboratives to strengthen Ward-based providers and expand services for families facing economic hardship.
6. **Expand Family Success Centers (\$1 million):** Allocate \$1 million to expand Family Success Centers to serve more families in crisis while increasing youth programming, mentorship, and enrichment opportunities.

Recreation Facilities

Ward 7 is home to a variety of recreation facilities, including rec centers, libraries, playgrounds, and community gardens. Recreation facilities are essential community spaces that serve neighbors of all ages. They provide opportunities for learning, physical activity, and social connections, fostering healthy lifestyles and strengthening neighborhoods.

1. **Modernization of Benning Stoddert Recreation Center (\$15 million):** Invest \$15 million to modernize the center, expand recreational access and strengthen a key community hub while creating additional space and programming for youth and seniors.
2. **Continue Upgrades to Recreational Fields:** Continue investments in recreational field upgrades and park improvements, including facilities like Woody Ward, to support youth sports, community activities, and public health.
3. **New Upgrades to Recreational Fields:** Invest in upgrades to recreational fields, including Kenilworth Park Football Field and Track, Marvin Gaye Park, and the Ridge Road Football and Soccer Field, to expand access to safe, high-quality spaces for youth sports, exercise, and outdoor recreation.
4. **Garden Fund to Support Urban Gardens (\$250,000):** Establish a fund to support community gardens such as Lederer Gardens, The Farms at Kelly Miller, and East Capitol Urban Farm, strengthening local food access, environmental education, and neighborhood engagement.

Public Safety and Community Stability

Public safety remains a top priority for Ward 7 residents. Investments in policing resources, technology, violence prevention programs, and reentry services will strengthen safety while addressing the root causes of crime.

1. **Mobile Crime Cameras (\$300,000):** Deploy mobile crime cameras in high-priority areas, including commercial corridors like Minnesota Avenue and Eastern Avenue, and neighborhoods such as Deanwood and River Terrace, to deter crime and support investigations.
2. **Expanded CCTV Coverage (\$700,000):** Expand camera coverage along major corridors including Pennsylvania Avenue, Minnesota Avenue, Benning Road, and East Capitol Street, to deter theft and burglary and enhance public safety.
3. **Reentry Resource Center (\$1.5 million):** Establish a centralized hub to support returning citizens with employment services, housing navigation, and supportive services to reduce recidivism.
4. **Sixth District Headquarters Renovation:** Modernize the MPD Sixth District Headquarters to improve infrastructure, support police operations, and better serve the community.
5. **DC Jail Renovation (DC Jail and Central Cell Block):** Ensure continued funding for modernization to improve safety, living conditions, and facility operations.
6. **Access to Justice Initiative (\$32 million):** Fully fund legal services that support vulnerable residents with housing, domestic violence, immigration, and disability cases, benefiting thousands of Ward 7 residents annually.
7. **Domestic Violence Prevention Initiatives and Support:** Strengthen funding for prevention programs and partnerships with providers such as DC SAFE, DASH, and House of Ruth to support victims and reduce domestic violence.
8. **Pilot Pay for Success Program for Returning Citizens (\$966k):** Launch a pilot program providing intensive support, training, and housing assistance to help returning citizens achieve stability and reduce recidivism.

9. **Safe Passage:** Continue investing in Safe Passage ambassadors to ensure students can travel safely to and from school across Ward 7.
10. **Violence Intervention Initiatives:** Expand support for programs such as Pathways and Cure the Streets to proactively engage at-risk individuals and reduce violent crime.

Housing Stability and Family Supports

Rising housing costs and economic instability threaten housing security for many Ward 7 families. Investments in rental assistance, homeownership opportunities, and housing preservation will help residents remain in their communities and build generational wealth.

1. **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP):** Maintain funding for ERAP to help low-income families facing housing cost burdens avoid eviction and remain in stable housing.
2. **Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP):** Continue funding HPAP to expand homeownership opportunities for Ward 7 residents and support long-term wealth building.
3. **Housing Preservation (\$45 million):** Increase funding to accelerate repairs, strengthen oversight, and improve conditions in public and affordable housing while preserving existing units.
4. **Housing Production Trust Fund (\$100 million):** Maintain strong investment in the Housing Production Trust Fund to expand affordable housing development and preservation across the District.
5. **Housing Counseling Services (\$750,000):** Fund housing counseling services that provide residents with guidance on homeownership, foreclosure prevention, and housing stability.
6. **Rapid Rehousing (\$1.5 million):** Continue funding Rapid Rehousing to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness quickly secure stable housing.
7. **Homeowner Repair Programs:** Maintain investment in home repair programs such as DHCD’s Single-Family Residential Rehabilitation Program, OP’s Historic Homeowner Grant Program, and DOEE’s Weatherization Assistance Program to preserve homes and neighborhood stability.
8. **Permanent Supportive Housing:** Maintain funding for vouchers and services to help individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness secure stable housing and ongoing support.

Health and Wellness: Keeping our Ward Healthy

Ward 7 residents continue to face significant health disparities. Strategic investments in prevention, mental health services, and community-based health initiatives will improve outcomes and promote healthier communities.

1. **Behavioral Health and Substance Use Services:** Increase support for DBH programs—including community response teams, stabilization services, and treatment programs—to expand prevention, intervention, and recovery services.
2. **Men’s Health Pilot Program (\$350,000):** Invest \$350,000 in a pilot program focused on improving health outcomes for men in Ward 7 and addressing significant life expectancy disparities.

3. **Chronic Disease Program (\$350,000):** Fund targeted health initiatives to address chronic disease disparities and improve access to preventive care in underserved communities.
4. **Food Access Fund through DMPED and Invest in Community-Based Food Programs:** Continue funding the Food Access Fund through DMPED and support community food initiatives to expand grocery, restaurant, and healthy food options in areas with limited access.
5. **Stronger Oversight and Enforcement of Rehabilitation Facilities, Assisted Living Facilities, and Nursing Homes:** Increase funding for DC Health to strengthen oversight and enforcement of rehabilitation centers, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes, ensuring residents receive safe, high-quality care.

Senior Support

Ward 7 is home to a vibrant and growing senior population. Targeted investments are needed to help seniors age safely in place, maintain their homes, and remain connected to their communities. Expanding senior programming, social activities, and multigenerational support will help reduce isolation, promote wellness, and ensure older adults can continue to thrive in the neighborhoods they helped build.

1. **Senior Home Stabilization Fund (\$1.5 million):** Establish a \$1.5 million fund to help senior homeowners cover critical home repairs, preventing displacement and supporting aging in place.
2. **Senior Village (\$450,000):** Continue funding for Senior Villages and provide additional support to expand programming at the two newly established Ward 7 Senior Villages.
3. **Rec 4 Seniors Program:** Increase funding for Senior Wellness Centers to expand activities and wellness programming for seniors.
4. **Safe at Home Program:** Maintain funding for home accessibility upgrades, such as ramps, grab bars, and safety modifications, to help seniors live independently.

Transportation

Improving transportation infrastructure and connectivity is critical to mobility, safety, and economic access for Ward 7 residents. Many residents rely on public transit, making reliable bus service essential. With the removal of streetcar funding, greater emphasis must be placed on strengthening transportation connections and ensuring Ward 7 residents have reliable access to the rest of the city.

1. **Convert Parkside Service Station Road.** Convert the Parkside service station road into a standard roadway to improve connectivity between the Parkside community and Benning Road.
2. **Maintain, Develop, and Improve Pedestrian Bridges:** Fully fund Phases I and II of the Benning Road/Willie J. Hardy Bridge and continue maintaining pedestrian bridges across Ward 7 to ensure they remain safe, clean, and accessible.
3. **Major Ward 7 Corridor Projects:** Continue funding and modify projects based on community feedback for DDOT's major corridor projects, like East Capitol, Southern Avenue, Alabama Avenue, Route 295, Kenilworth Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue/Minnesota Avenue.
4. **Expand WMATA Bus Services:** Work with WMATA to improve bus reliability and connectivity following the Better Bus Network rollout, addressing longer travel times and limited east-west connections.

5. **Pedestrian Safety Measures:** Increase funding for safety measures such as improved lighting, longer crosswalk timing, reflective crosswalks, and enhanced signage to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities.
6. **Traffic Calming Measures:** Expand funding for DDOT's Traffic Safety Input program to increase installation of speed bumps, safety cameras, raised crosswalks, and curb bulb-outs.
7. **Ward 7 Transportation Connectivity Study (\$100,000):** Fund a DDOT-led study to identify transportation gaps and improve pedestrian, transit, and roadway connections throughout Ward 7, with a focus on strengthening mobility within neighborhoods and improving east-west connectivity.
8. **Expand DDOT's Community Engagement:** Fund additional staff in DDOT's Community Engagement Division so each Ward has a dedicated community engagement specialist.
9. **Parking Enforcement:** Increase funding for DPW's Parking Enforcement Division to hire additional officers and address abandoned and out-of-state vehicles.