



## City Council Candidate Survey 2021 Birmingham Municipal Election

*Greater Birmingham Ministries invites you to complete this candidate survey. Your responses will inform our non-partisan 2021 Birmingham Municipal Election Guide, which will reach over 20,000 Birmingham residents. Please return your completed candidate survey to [electionguide@gbm.org](mailto:electionguide@gbm.org) by July 2.*

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**1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.**

I am a proud and deeply rooted Birmingham native. I am a seasoned community and economic development professional and active community volunteer. I chair the Revitalization Committee of a thriving not-for-profit in the neighborhood where I live.

**2. Please name any endorsements you have received.**

N/A.

**3. What are the biggest issues in your district and how would you address those issues in your role as a councilor?**

- Gun violence; (Refer to #5)
- Blight due to long term disinvestment; (Refer to #6)
- Poverty levels above the average for Birmingham and low educational attainment; and
- Gaps in convenience retail, services and amenities to support a healthy lifestyle. (Refer to #4)

**4. How do you think the City of Birmingham should provide economic and corporate incentives?**

Incentives should be based on objective criteria and strategic goals set by the Mayor and City Council, and not governed by whatever proposals happen to walk in the door. It would be good to develop a scoring rubric that could inform the private sector generally of the preferred conditions, goals and values for city participation in private ventures and the city council can use the rubric as an objective guide in decision-making.

**5. In 2020 Birmingham had the highest homicide rate in 25 years. So far 2021 is on trajectory for an even higher homicide rate. In your role as a councilor, how would you address crime and public safety?**

I believe the most important investment Birmingham can make right now is in its people and communities. Communities and NGOs should be empowered and funded to create an infrastructure of peace according to a community-wide strategic plan for peace.

I'll advocate for better screening, recruiting, training, support and retention of police officers. I'd like to see the vacant positions in West Precinct filled so we don't have overworked, stressed-out officers on the streets. However, many of the officer positions should be filled with police social workers.

I'll advocate for us to become a trauma informed city where mental illness is not ignored or treated like a crime. I'll advocate for affordable accessible, high quality mental health care and emotional wellness for all.

I'll advocate for increased support for returning citizens (from incarceration) so that they can find dignified work or business ownership opportunities and be encouraged to be credible messengers to those lacking hope or making poor decisions without considering the consequences.

I would encourage all hands to be on deck: We can all be shot spotters, truancy officers, play mamas, walk (patrol) in our communities, etc.

**6. In your opinion what are the most critical public services that the City of Birmingham is funding or should fund and how will you use your position as a councilor to ensure these are funded?**

Recycling is important because landfills are costly, and plastics and Styrofoam do not break down. I think a good old-fashioned awareness campaign can help change consumption patterns and motivate more citizens to sort waste for recycling. There should be a way to allow citizens who recycle to opt-in for curbside recycling so that the rolling stock does not have to cover the entire city (wasting manhours and fuel) looking for the bins of the recyclers.

A more effective blight elimination strategy is needed. Right now, the city spends a great deal of our tax dollars maintaining neglected **privately** owned property. As the problem gets bigger and

bigger and more costly, the level of service to our communities decreases and people are less satisfied with the results. More community development corporations are needed to work hyper-locally, in partnership with the city, to help eliminate blight and stabilize the built environment in our neighborhoods. These non-profits would be eligible for grants from the private sector and foundations. The city's funds can be redirected to paving our streets, maintaining our parks, recreation centers and libraries.

**7. Where in our communities do you see opportunities for Birmingham government to address the inequity between people of different races, genders, and sexual orientations, and how, as a councilor, will you support policies to address these gaps?**

One of my focus areas is "promoting **inclusive** economic recovery". The thrust is two- fold and relates to helping individuals in District 8 unlock more of their economic potential through skills development, employment and/or entrepreneurship. The other relates to attracting investment (in new housing, retail and services) to underserved areas like District 8.

In revitalizing our communities, we want them to be vibrant and healthy, but also diverse and equitable. Being slower growing as a city, we have a chance to learn from mistakes others have made and prevent the gentrification that other places experienced. We must be intentional about this!

I would advocate for the income threshold for property tax exemptions for elderly homeowners to be adjusted upward every few years.

I would encourage homeowners to create Wills and unify title to inherited property.

I would research rent control models and advocate for better affordable housing development tools/incentives.