



## 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.

After earning a dual bachelor’s degree in Sociology and Administration of Justice from Rutgers University in 2002, I learned that my truest mastery is in connecting people to resources. This skill is demonstrated in every professional role I embark on; from working as a child protective service investigator at the Department of Human Resources to coordinating community coalitions with neighborhood associations and developing partnerships to build community programs such as the Fountain Heights mobile grocery store. I currently live in District 8 with my two sons and serve as a statewide Hunger Advocacy Coordinator for Alabama Arise, Board President of SWEET Alabama, and board director of the Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust.

I moved to Birmingham to create a greater sense of family and community for my two sons. After nearly two decades of advocacy work aimed at reforming harmful policies

that divide communities, I decided to run for Birmingham's City Council to amplify the voices and visions of my neighbors in District 8.

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

To date we have received an endorsement from the Working Families Party, DSA - Birmingham Chapter, and RWDSU Mid-South Council.

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

Sanitation and Infrastructure: Advocate to ensure that all annual budgets prioritize adequately funding sanitation, street paving, and sidewalk maintenance. This will include ensuring that all of our infrastructure is ADA accessible.

Blight: Prioritize passing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund ordinance (as recommended by Birmingham's 2014 Neighborhood Housing Study), and ensuring it is properly funded in the annual budget, partnering with community based non-profits to develop permanent affordable home ownership, and working with community groups to support the establishment of community-owned grocery stores and agribusinesses. To help accomplish these goals I will also hire staff who specialize in fundraising and grant writing to ensure our office is able to partner with neighborhood based development organizations.

True Public Safety: I fight to ensure we adequately fund community groups who are working to establish violence interruption programs. I will sponsor an ordinance to adopt a Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program model to ensure we have mental health professionals and social workers to work with our EMT's and Birmingham Fire and Rescue for 911 calls related to mental health and homelessness. I will collaborate with hospitals and clinics on the westside to establish a mental health cooperative and crisis response intake center to ensure affordable mental health programs. I will pursue grants and discretionary money to fund and expand youth programs in our city. For example, I will work with community groups to establish a community music and art studio that engages youthful talent in safe spaces, and is staffed by crisis intervention and de-escalation specialists.

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

Birmingham currently provides millions of dollars in economic incentives to billion-dollar corporations while ignoring the needs of small, black-owned businesses. We should ensure these incentives support the black brilliance in our own community, further develop community-owned businesses, and invest in expanding the capacity of our neighborhood-based community development nonprofits. I would ensure residents, neighborhood associations, community-based nonprofits, unions, and black-owned businesses have a seat at the table for all development projects by uplifting the importance of implementing Community Benefit Agreements with corporations and

developers seeking business spaces within our communities. As the slogan states, the 'World Is Coming' to celebrate World Games 2022. Such statements should accompany a sense of stability and empowerment for our communities; neighbors' priorities must be on the forefront of corporate development tactics in light of the pending influx.

**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?**

There's a better way to address crime and violence in our neighborhoods, but it requires bold leadership and communal alliances. We must use innovative solutions to overhaul the city's current crisis response system with a human-centered approach. This includes using a public health lens to address crime by combating the two leading reasons why youth are funneled into the criminal justice system: poverty and mental health issues. As a councilor, I will work to establish a Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program that introduces trained medics, professional crisis responders, and social workers to 911 calls from residents experiencing mental health, substance abuse emergencies, and issues surrounding homelessness. Too many of our communal issues are rooted in poverty and a lack of trained violence interrupters and mental health specialists. I would promote a two-pronged approach, pairing first responders with trained violence interruption and mental health specialists as well as hosting ongoing neighborhood conflict de-escalation workshops to advance transformative justice in our communities.

**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?**

The City should be uplifting the priorities of residents. In my experience organizing with residents, community members voiced that they prioritize child and youth development (i.e. libraries, education, and other youth programming), food security, true public safety, mental health care, and developing affordable housing. However, for years, residents' needs have been ignored. I believe that all tax-paying residents should have the power to establish budget allocations according to their priorities, not just the 10 elected officials in City Hall. I will coordinate with neighborhood association officers, community residents, and faith-based leaders to ensure Birmingham passes an ordinance to implement an annual participatory budgeting process to complement the existing Citizens Participation Plan. This would ensure that residents have a say on how a portion of tax-dollars are spent in their own neighborhoods and communities; allocating budgetary funds where they are most needed, based on street-level issue reporting.

**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?**

No one is free until we are all free - there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives. Birmingham is a booming metropolis and home to an array of brilliantly talented residents. Still, the city lacks amply funded community spaces to showcase individual or communal skills and talents. One solution is to adequately fund urban farming projects, multi-media art spaces and other safe locations to engage residents of different age groups. Simultaneously raising cultural awareness and bridging generational gaps through innovative programs that create [learning/teaching/engagement] opportunities for both youth and elders.