



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 by July 2.

Name: Crystal N. Smitherman

District: 6

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1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.

Crystal is a practicing attorney and Birmingham's youngest City Council member, appointed in 2019. She is the Chair of the Public Improvements and Beautification Committee and a member of the Budget and Finance, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts and Public Safety Committees on the City Council. The daughter of lifelong public servants, Judge Carole Smitherman and State Senator Rodger Smitherman, she had grown up with a deep sense of dedication to giving back to her neighborhood.

2. Please name any endorsements you have received.

Home Builders, local labor unions

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

The largest issues District Six faces is public safety, illegal dumping, and improving the quality of life. In my time on the City Council, I've worked to address public safety and the gun violence that disproportionately impacts our neighborhood through the installation of security cameras and lighting throughout our districts. To protect our children, I've supported and provided security to protect Washington K-8 Students before and after school hours as well as improved lighting in Memorial Park and the district.

We've also banded together to clean our streets; I've supported city-wide recycling programs and organized community clean-ups throughout our district. In District Six, I've also worked to improve the opportunities for our children. I've placed tutors in math and science classrooms at Washington K-8 and Hemphill Elementary Schools and hosted a financial literacy series at Parker and Wenonah High School. These are just a few of the many ways that I'm tackling the issues that our neighbors face.

Food deserts are a way too common in District 6 and throughout the City of Birmingham. During the pandemic I fed over 2,000 District 6 citizens. I also support the West End Community Gardens and plan to work with the Hemphill Elementary and Washington K-8 students to plant gardens on school grounds.

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

Economic development is a constant focus of state and local governments. Government officials work to attract businesses, jobs, and investment to the area. The City of Birmingham should continue to offer corporate tax incentives and tax breaks. City governments offer incentives when they think a company will add so much money to the local economy that giving the company a pass on some taxes will more than pay for itself.

It is important to attract employers that jobs that bring money into the local community from the outside which will help to boost the flow of the city's economic system. If those employers import more money into the community from the outside than the tax incentives cost, the tax incentives are worth it. Tax incentives help to target certain businesses or industries that will encourage the creation, expansion or relocation of career areas that are needed in our city. This targeting helps to steer the economy by lowering the cost of doing business in a desired industry such as the technology sectors.

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?

District Six is far too familiar with the impacts of gun violence. I've begun addressing it through some common-sense public safety measures to make our neighborhood safer

through the installation of security cameras and lighting throughout our districts. To protect our children, I've supported and provided security to protect Washington K-8 Students before and after school hours as well as improved lighting in Memorial Park.

I am also strongly supporting the Faith in Action/Peacekeepers and Cure Violence organizations in the city-wide budget and to use the American Rescue Plan funding to support their initiatives. I also support the Citizen Review Board for police conduct. Further, District 6 will be organized into block watch opportunities for each neighborhood.

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 of Birmingham's transit system and public library system are the two of the most critical public services that the city is funding. I advocated for the stability of sound and high-quality level of funding for our transit and public library system to remain in our city-wide budget. I support the city expanding our routes and hours throughout the neighborhoods. I also support the city expanding the Birmingham On-Demand VIA microtransit service to all nine districts to provide another form of transit for all Birmingham constituents.

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?

Education is an essential function of government. I believe we need to include more technology based education curriculum as well as specific trade education license.

As a young person, I feel deeply that our goal in District Six and across Birmingham should be to build a community that is equal for all our residents, regardless of their race, gender, who they love or how they identify.

On the City Council, we fight for resolutions that affirm the rights of all our citizens and recognize the long struggle of civil rights in Birmingham and District Six. For us that history is real. I believe that by ensuring equal economic opportunity, public safety, and equal treatment and justice under the law, we will see a fairer Birmingham.