



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: Joseph Casper Baker III

District: 3

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Campaign Website: www.electjcb3.com

Campaign Social Media Pages: [electjcb3](#) (all platforms)

1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.

Joseph Casper Baker III was born in Selma, Alabama and moved to Birmingham in 2002 to attend UAB, where he obtained a B.A. in Philosophy. He is the founder of I Believe in Birmingham and has been involved in numerous efforts of civic activism including serving on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for Birmingham and the One Great Community Council of UAB; as well as involvement in the production of many of our most beloved cultural city's events such as the Magic City Brewfest, Sidewalk Film Festival, Secret Stages Music Discovery Festival, ¡Fiesta!, and others. He runs his own business doing consulting and contracting in Information Technology and Telecommunications.

2. Please name any endorsements you have received.

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

I believe many of Birmingham's most concerning issues stretch across district lines and involve the entire city. These include inadequate educational opportunities, food and housing insecurity, violent crime, poor infrastructure, insufficient mass transit, and lack of transparency in government affairs. District 3 in particular has concerns about public safety and crime in our entertainment and business districts as well as poor roads and sidewalks.

As Councilor, I would work with the Board of Education to investigate how we can bring more financial and personnel resources to bear on increasing the quality of education throughout the city. I would also work with stakeholders and interested parties to address adult education and skills training to provide more opportunities for citizens to improve themselves and hopefully become entrepreneurs.

On crime, I want to bring together citizens, businesses, activist groups, and the BPD to form citizen driven policing efforts. I believe it is essential to building strong communities for the stakeholders in those places to be empowered as the stewards of their neighborhoods.

Looking to the future, we must be pushing for Birmingham to be a development center of the technologies of the future including bioengineering, genetic based medicines, robotics, machine learning, and green technologies.

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

We must invest in creating opportunities for individual citizens (better education, skills training, and how to start and run businesses) as well as looking for partnerships in funding the technological developments that are critical to our future. The City needs to continue the recent trend of reducing competition/poaching with other municipalities in the metro while investigating how we can pool resources to more effectively grow.

- 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 only effective way to reduce crime in the long term is to improve the lives of citizens through education and employment opportunities so that a "life of crime" isn't their only choice. Most crime is born of the stresses and pressures that come from poverty and the struggles to escape it. If we want a peaceful and prosperous City we have to ensure all citizens have the ability to improve themselves and build a future.

- 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?**

Education, entrepreneurship, and public safety are critical to the health of a community. In addition, public green spaces, cultural amenities, and active transit options are

instrumental in supporting good public health. As Councilor, I want to increase the budgets for education, transit, community centers, roads and sidewalks, and cultural institutions as well as seeking more private partnerships and investment for such.

- 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?**

I believe that Birmingham will only escape the tragedies of its past by facing the realities and legacies that have carried forward into its present. Even if everyone in Birmingham today isn't a Bull Connor, the actions and consequences of our past haven't just evaporated. If we are to move forward we must continue to have conversations about the status of our communities and how they got there. I will seek to implement programs and policies that benefit all citizens of Birmingham but with a particular focus on how we can assist people in escaping generational poverty. I likewise will support efforts aimed at reducing inequity and bringing more community stakeholders into conversations and decisions about their City.