



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: Keith O. Williams

District: 6

Campaign Email: info@keithowilliams.info

Campaign Phone Number: 205-203-5303

Campaign Address: PO Box 550121, Birmingham, AL 35255

Campaign Website: www.keithowilliams.info

Campaign Social Media Pages:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/kowilliamspc

Twitter: www.twitter.com/kowilliamspc

Instagram: www.instagram.com/kowilliamspc

1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.

Keith Oscar Williams is a community activist, minister, website designer, certified counseling practitioner, and published author. Williams was born on April 24, 1974, the third of five children to Albert Williams, Sr (a retired fabricator) and Dorothy L. Williams (a homemaker). He graduated from A.H. Parker High School in 1992 with

postsecondary studies at Alabama State University (business management), Liberty University, and Achology (certified counseling practitioner).

Williams servers as Associate Minister at St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church, Co-founder of Voters Legal Justice Watch Group, founder of Great I Am Ministries Outreach International and Greater Works Business Services, Vice President of North Titusville Neighborhood Association, and a member of Birmingham United Neighborhoods, Faith in Action Alabama, Alabama Arise, the Alabama Poor People's Campaign, and Our Revolution Birmingham.

Williams political experience includes running for Birmingham City Council in 2017 and 2019, Delegate for the Alabama Democratic Executive Committee District 55 in 2018, and North Titusville Vice President in 2018 and 2021.

2. Please name any endorsements you have received.

#VOTEPROCHOICE, Alabama Mahali Party, Our Revolution – Our Time University of Alabama

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

Crime

Community policing (to include Neighborhood Watch and building a positive relationship between the police and the citizens)

Problem solving policing

Revocation of contracts with companies the city purchase surveillance equipment

Complete investigation of the police department

Create an independent citizen police review board with investigative and prosecutive powers. This board will also establish and enforce public safety policy.

Institute programs involving violence interruption and intervention

Restore the Police Athletic Team program

Defund operation dealing with mental health, social services, traffic, and domestic relations

Fully implement 8 Can't Wait to include ending qualified immunity on the local level

Neighborhood Revitalization

Form grassroots partners to provide affordable homes either to build or rehab

Petition the state of Alabama to revamp the Birmingham Land Bank Authority with complete autonomy to seek funding from multiple sources. This includes a smoother, less expensive process for citizens to acquire property with rehabilitation assistance.

Have a separate line item for the Neighborhood Revitalization Fund to repair infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, flood drains, lighting, etc.)

Provide safes and beautify communities (walking trails, pocket parks, urban gardens and forests, and outdoor entertainment venues)

Economic Opportunity

Bring in developers to redevelop acres of vacant land to build affordable housing, address flooding, build grocery stores, retail establishments, entertainment venues, and quality restaurants

Use the cooperative economic model so citizens can purchase land to build homes and/or businesses (i.e., community land trust, Cleveland

Transparency

Monthly listening tours. Keith plans to visit a site in every neighborhood in District 6 to hear concerns and take information back to city hall.

Monthly newsletter to make sure constituents are aware of what's happening in their neighborhood, in D6, and in Birmingham.

Quarterly town hall meetings with major district and city updates. Constituents will have an opportunity to ask questions, submit complaints, and even offer suggestions.

Weekly city council meeting updates to include committee meetings.

District 6 updates on Facebook Live and YouTube.

Suggestion boxes will be placed at selected locations throughout the district including libraries, community housing, and high traffic areas. Keith and his staff will collect responses weekly and address those issues. Special town hall meetings for major issues such as neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and the budget. Other meetings will be scheduled at the discretion of the Councilor.

Website and social media pages will be packed with information about what's happening in Birmingham and District 6.

Updates on discretionary spending to be made public to the media, on the website, social media pages, newsletter, and at town hall meetings.

The District 6 Neighborhood Council will consist of neighborhood officers from all 12 neighborhoods to act as counsel and liaison with the people and city departments.

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

The city must invest in small businesses, particularly African American owned businesses new and old. For existing businesses, update the Fourth Avenue Business District, create food truck parks (temporary or permanent), and create a line item in the budget to where businesses can apply for funding. Grants from outside sources should also be made available. For new businesses, repeal opportunity zones and replace them with cooperative business and entertainment districts. The city should provide resources for new entrepreneurs in conjunction with state and federal agencies. Assistance with getting a business license, setting up a business, and opportunities for funding and marketing.

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?

1. Invoke Article 8 of the Mayor Council Act to place the Birmingham Police Department under investigation in an open forum format demanding transparency and forcing accountability.

2. Defund police operations that have become ineffective and redirect those funds to professionals and organizations involved in dealing with issues such as mental health, substance abuse, social services, education, and socioeconomic development. The policing system is beyond reformed and needs to be dismantled in its present form.

3. Have tough conversations addressing the root cause of gun violence and other crimes. The grassroots community and the people will have an opportunity to have a seat at the table. It will end with a plan of action and the execution of that plan.

4. Petition the federal government to end the 1033 program that allow military surplus to be sold to local law enforcement and retail establishments.

5. Revamp the Public Safety Citizen Review Board to become an independent entity of the city chosen by the people to investigate complaints and holding the police department accountable. This board will also be responsible for creating strict policies to include education, training, qualifications, evaluation, and operations of the police department.

6. Support alternative policing models as described by many grassroots organizations, the Public Safety Task Force, and input from residents. Methods including violence interruption, intervention, community policing, problem solving policing, and mental health and social services opportunities.

7. Petition the state to enact gun sense laws as part of the city council legislative agenda. Advocate for the removal of military grade weapons to be placed off the streets and demilitarized the police.

8. Address the root cause of crime by taking away funds from corporate and special interests and invest those funds in people. Among the issues relating to crime are poverty, social justice, socioeconomic development, neighborhood revitalization, education, mental health and substance abuse, and social services.

9. Advocate for participatory budgeting which allows the taxpayers to decide where funds should be spent. Most people believe the issues mentioned in the eighth bullet need to be a part of the budget in order to address the above issues. It will become an ordinance supplementary to Article 5 of the Mayor Council Act.

10. Use the Cleveland Model to empower residents to take pride in their communities by creating a system of cooperative economics to control the economic narrative and create generational wealth. This includes the use of the community land trusts model, urban farming, and cooperative economics.

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?

Providing safe places for our young people and senior citizens is vital to keep down crime and provide positive opportunities and influence. Therefore, full funding for libraries, parks and recreation centers, afterschool care, and extracurricular activities is a must in our communities.

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?

In 2017/2018, I joined activists from all over Birmingham to create a Human Rights Ordinance to address inequity of difference races, genders, sexual orientation, etc. I later learned that the ordinance have no enforceable or investigative teeth to address inequality and discrimination. My influence as a councilor is to invite the grassroots community to strengthen the ordinance, make the Human Rights Commission and independent body, and give more investigative and enforceable power.

Additionally, I will push for an ordinance to make Birmingham a sanctuary city, end all cooperating with ICE to include defunding and retracting resources, and to bring more minorities to the table for input and implementation of policies and addressing issues concerning marginalized ethnic groups.