



## **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.*

**Name: Valerie A. Abbott**

**District: 3**

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**Campaign Social Media Pages: NA**

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

**I am a native of Birmingham, fortunate to have been raised by two parents along with my two brothers to love God and to value life and the environment. I graduated from Auburn University in 1974 and began working for South Central Bell, later AT&T. In 1999, I achieved a Master's degree from Birmingham-Southern and in 2001 I was elected to the Birmingham City Council, where my goal was to improve the quality of life for city residents. In 2011, I retired from AT&T with 44 years of service to concentrate full-time on my City Council duties.**

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

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

The Council is the legislative body of the city, and ordinance modifications are needed to improve & enhance the noise, tree, ZBA, housing, and many other ordinances. The biggest issues in my district are the lack of zoning/housing code enforcement and inattention to infrastructure. Residents ask most often about street paving and sidewalk repairs, but another routine complaint is about flooding caused by clogged storm sewers. Since these issues are handled by the Mayor's office and are his responsibility, Councilors can serve as advocates for action on these types of issues.

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

Incentive requests should be evaluated to ensure the most productive use of the limited funds available. The number and quality of jobs created and the commitment that Birmingham residents will be specifically recruited and trained are of utmost importance.

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

Public Safety is the purview of the Administration, so as a Councilor, I will respond to the proposals of the Mayor and Chief of Police. If legislation is needed to enhance their efforts, I will work cooperatively with my colleagues to create such legislation.

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?

Public Works is absolutely critical in the struggle to keep our city clean, so we need to ensure that full funding for personnel & equipment is provided in the Annual Operating Budget. The Fire & Police Departments continue to be very important for our residents' health and safety and should be adequately funded and equipped. The city's Operating Budget is proposed by the Mayor, so the Council's job is to work cooperatively with the Administration to ensure adequate funding for these critically important entities.

7. Where in our communities do you see opportunities for the 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 the most effective means of addressing inequities in Birmingham are homeownership and the building of wealth. Via the City's various housing programs, we should work to rehabilitate good housing and build new housing on vacant lots in Birmingham's neighborhoods, then assist targeted populations with down payment assistance and homeownership training to achieve long-term benefits.