



## **Mayoral 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. We will publish your full responses to this survey on our website, [gbm.org](http://gbm.org). Please return your completed candidate survey to [electionguide@gbm.org](mailto:electionguide@gbm.org) by July 2.*

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### **Campaign Social Media Pages:**

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MayorRandallWoodfin/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/randallwoodfin>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/woodfinforbham/>
- TikTok: @RandallWoodfin

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

As a lifelong resident of Birmingham and the current mayor of the City, I am committed to making a vision of an equitable, inclusive, safe, and prosperous Birmingham - where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential - a reality. Though we have accomplished a lot in the last four years (fully paid college for all Birmingham children, Pardons for Progress to remove barriers to employment, increasing Birmingham's national rating for LGBTQ+ equality from 12 to a perfect 100, establishing the Division of Social Justice and Racial Equity including the Inter-Faith Roundtable and the nation's first Office of Peace and Policy, anti-gun violence task forces, reimagining public safety, strengthening public health infrastructure, revitalizing

neighborhoods, leading recovery from COVID, and more), with your support, I will continue to build a better future for Birmingham -- so we can all make Progress Together.

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

Starting with my first run for mayor, I have received endorsements that represent the diverse movement behind our mission, including but not limited to: Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Nina Turner, the Working Families Party, Collective PAC, Human Rights Campaign, Progressive Change Campaign Committee, People for the American Way, Future Generations PAC, Ready 2 Vote, MoveOn, Democracy for America, Political Revolution, among others. I also received endorsements from the Birmingham Firefighters, Fraternal Order of Police, Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, Equality Alabama, National Association of Letter Carriers, the Grassroots Coalition of Birmingham, and many supportive national and local groups and individuals.

Our campaign is proud to be endorsed by State Rep. Rolanda Hollis, Jefferson County Commissioner Sheila Tyson and to be backed by the most important of all -- the people. Birmingham is about the power of the people, and I'm honored to continue to have the people's endorsement as their mayor.

**3. What do you think the biggest challenges facing Birmingham will be in the next 5 years? How do you plan to address them?**

The biggest challenges for Birmingham over the next five years are reimagining public safety and fully recovering from the pandemic that ravaged our local economy and affected so many families and businesses in our community.

First, we have to comprehensively address gun violence in Birmingham. This requires both a robust enforcement response and comprehensively addressing the root causes of gun violence. I will always work to get guns off of our streets and help continue the overall decline in violent crime that Birmingham has seen under my tenure. The Birmingham Police Department confiscated well over 2,000 guns in 2020, and they've been able to find and confiscate over 1,400 just so far this year.

This issue shows the true spirit of Progress Together. I announced a multi-agency task force to better predict, intervene, and respond to gun crimes in partnership with local, state and federal law enforcement officials. And I stepped beyond the walls of City Hall to work with our community to solve gun violence incidents in partnership with local faith leaders and the CrimeStoppers of Metro Alabama, offering cash rewards to community members who get off the sidelines and speak up. Above all, I'm dedicated to treating gun violence as the public health epidemic that it is. That means addressing the underlying, intersectional factors of poverty, housing instability and food insecurity that contribute to crime. We made progress by establishing the country's only Office of Peace and Policy, which holistically addresses the root causes of crime and coordinates the non-policing aspects of public safety. And we will leverage the funding secured from President Biden's American Rescue Plan to invest in community intervention pilots, expand our reentry programming for our returning residents, and invest in

community-based first responder programs -- so our police department can focus on the most violent crimes.

Recovering fully from the pandemic will require that we invest in our public health infrastructure, and we intend to do so by leveraging Biden's recovery investment to create mobile vaccination clinics that will reach our hardest-to-reach populations in the City, and by pursuing federal resources for credible, culturally-competent outreach to help break through any remaining vaccine hesitancy. We are also committed to continuing to provide safety-net supports like rental and utility assistance to our residents that are still seeking to rebound economically, and continue our multi-million dollar commitment to small businesses hardest hit by the pandemic.

**4. How do you plan to invest in and support minority and women owned businesses in Birmingham? With Birmingham's growing tech scene, how will you support equity in this field?**

To date, my Administration has already spent over \$24 million with minority and women-owned businesses in FY2020, and has a target of spending over \$150 million with minority and women-owned businesses by 2025. My administration also took an important step by initiating a disparity study that will form the basis of the City's new Diverse Business Opportunity Program. The resulting program will be in place before the 2022 World Games, presenting a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our local small businesses.

Additionally, we have also made progress in supporting our small businesses through COVID-19. The Department of Innovation and Economic Opportunity launched BHAM Strong, the City's signature low-interest loan program, to distribute more than \$2 million to nearly 100 Birmingham small businesses in addition to providing SBA programs like the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, as well as preexisting City loan programs.

For all businesses that want to call Birmingham home, I invite these companies to invest in our long-term future -- through contributions to the Birmingham Promise, cultivating our local talent, and encouraging our residents to enter into the tech workforce here locally. Further, I encourage our businesses in our own backyard to deepen their relationships with our Historically Black Colleges and Universities to identify and cultivate pipelines of diverse talent to strengthen their pathway to opportunity.

**5. With so much redevelopment focused in downtown Birmingham, how will you support investment in neighborhoods? How do you propose assisting Birmingham residents that may experience displacement as a result of increasing housing costs?**

When I ran for mayor back in 2017, I ran because previous city leadership did not prioritize making progress outside of downtown. Since being elected, we have made significant investments in stabilizing our neighborhoods. We have paved over thousands of miles of roads, filled potholes in every neighborhood, done our best to keep lawns of abandoned properties maintained, demolished thousands of abandoned homes, and acquired over 738 parcels

through our Land Bank Authority for redevelopment. And my FY22 Budget invests \$14 million more in neighborhood revitalization, including \$10 million for street paving, \$3.15 million more for demolition and weed abatement, \$300,000 more for the Land Bank Authority, \$300,000 more for a recycling pilot program, and \$275,000 more for making ADA accessible sidewalks.

And I still believe in building a better Birmingham in all 99 neighborhoods. That includes the neighborhoods overlooked by past leadership and the residents who have suffered for far too long. Plans are underway to focus on restorations and investments in four iconic Birmingham neighborhoods: Smithfield, Elyton Village, Downtown Ensley, and North Birmingham. We have invested in all 99 of our neighborhoods, and this is a promise kept to extend the City's redevelopment focus outside of downtown.

Significant investments outside of Downtown include:

- \$34 million for a new intermodal facility that we completed in 2018;
- \$1.8 million for a new tornado shelter at South Hampton Elementary;
- \$2.9 million for a new Fire Station 8 in the Kingston community;
- \$2 million to the Land Bank Authority, dramatically expanding the City's investment since 2017
- Expanded investment in the Department of Public Works by expanding the City's capacity for cutting grass, demolishing properties, and picking up litter;
- \$90 million in capital improvements across the City since we assumed office

Furthermore, to preserve the Black business legacy of the 4th Ave N Business District, we continue to work with our partners at Urban Impact and REV Birmingham to make investments and incentives for more minority-owned businesses to attract foot traffic or locate in the Business District. And we've made progress in a number of historic preservation projects that previous administrations neglected: the A.G. Gaston Motel, Carver Jazz Hall of Fame, Ramsay McCormack Building, Legion Field, and the Masonic Temple.

For housing, the best response to displacement is to build and maintain housing that people can afford to live in. My administration is investing in affordable housing, including \$55 million to redevelop the old Ensley High School property into 244 new affordable units along with green space, grocery options and child care facilities. And we have already invested over \$8 million dollars into housing repairs and preservations with a special focus on our seniors. When I am reelected, we intend to build hundreds more new, affordable rental and owner-occupied units.

**6. How will your plans and policies encourage or affect bringing services cut during the pandemic back to city residents in an equitable manner?**

We've endured a global pandemic, and we're still fighting the effects of it. Fairness, equitability and inclusivity carry through everything I do and seek to do as mayor of Birmingham, including when setting financial priorities and combating an ongoing global health pandemic.

Our Office of Social Justice and Racial Equity, which contains the nation's only Office of Peace and Policy, works diligently on improving inclusivity and equitability of our recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

Overall, Birmingham is coming out of this financial crisis stronger than ever before. We invested in our people, and made major investments in our neighborhoods. We made our city whole after facing the deepest economic crisis in over a decade.

And with unanimous support, we recently passed the most historic budget in Birmingham's 150-year history, which restored every sacrifice the pandemic forced us to make last year. I also worked to secure \$140 million from President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan that will provide even more historic investments in our people and neighborhoods over the next year and a half.

**7. How would you increase Birmingham residents' participation in decision making? Would you support a plan for participatory budgeting? How?**

I view boards, committees, and agencies as integral community partners to my decision-making. I am pleased to report that funding to our boards and agencies have been restored to the level before the pandemic.

In my first term, we also adopted a new approach to boards and agencies which included: a comprehensive and in-depth review of all city boards and agencies; increased transparency and accessibility by creating an interactive online directory and application; facilitated Boards & Agencies Orientation Sessions to educate and introduce their members; and a clear emphasis placed on ethical standards and efficient leadership for all board members.

Moreover, we have an intentional focus on the Academy of Civic Engagement to include residents in a deeper understanding of how local government works and ways to actively serve their communities. This, in turn, has led to a higher participation in government and allowed individuals to have their voices heard in the decision making process.

We support participatory budgeting, and with a plan and runway, look forward to incorporating more participatory budgeting in future city budgets.

**8. What policies or plans would you propose, support and/or implement to effectively utilize the \$5 million dollars in HUD funding awarded to Birmingham to combat homelessness?**

In order to combat Birmingham's battle with homelessness, we created the Homeless Advisory Policy Board and continue to establish and operate warming stations throughout the City during the winter months that have serviced thousands of homeless Birmingham residents. Our Homeless Outreach Partnership Engagement Initiative operates between the Birmingham Police Department, Municipal Court, and the One Roof Continuum of Care to create street outreach teams for our homeless residents, and my 2022 budget provides significant

investment in meeting the needs of our homeless population. That includes partnerships with local organizations like Disability Rights and Resources, Metro Changers, Inc., Titusville Development Corp., HouseProud, Habitat for Humanity, Build Up for Urban Prosperity, Christian Service Mission, Neighborhood Housing Services of Birmingham, Fair Housing Center of Northern AL, Birmingham Urban League, and Gateway.

The City will work with our local partners to develop a strategy for the additional \$5 million awarded from HUD.

**9. What programs do you plan to add and/or remove from the Mayor's Office?**

We intend to expand our investment in the Office of Peace and Policy in order to support the expansion of our reentry programming for returning residents and Citizen Review Board, as well as launch community-based violence intervention pilot and community-based first responder programs.

Additional announcements about new programs will be released in the coming months as we receive the federal support through the ARP and can allocate the funding to existing and newly proposed programming.

**10. With Birmingham receiving \$147 million in federal aid through the CARES Act, how would you propose the city spend its CARES Act funds?**

The City recently announced performance and premium pay for City employees that remain essential and continue to interface with residents. This will be the first initiative under the Magic City Recovery Plan - the City's plan for leveraging the dollars it intends to receive through the American Rescue Plan. Additional plans for the funding will be rolled out over the course of the next year and my priorities include investing in our public health infrastructure, comprehensively fighting violent crime, supporting our local industries hardest hit by COVID, investing in our neighborhood infrastructure, and expanding our affordable housing options.

**11. How do you plan to increase the city's revenue?**

Our general fund, bond, and Birmingham Fund reserves have increased by almost \$70 million since 2017 -- the highest cash reserves in Birmingham's history before COVID-19 began affecting economic activity.

We expand our revenue base by growing our local economy in an equitable, opportunity-focused way. That includes making strategic investments in our transportation and logistics assets like Daniel Payne Industrial Park and Birminghamport for workers to commute, aggressively recruiting industry and tourism to Birmingham as we look ahead to the 2022 World Games, and determining the highest and best use of City-owned assets and monetizing them as necessary.

**12. How will you ensure that public transportation and other transit planning is accessible to all residents of Birmingham?**

We are creating a more mobile Birmingham. We took dramatic steps to stabilize the leadership of the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority Board, and it has paid off in creating a stable environment for charting the future of mobility in Birmingham. Additionally, we are making historic investments in rapid transit and will complete the Birmingham Express by 2022 to create an East-West connector of neighborhoods and jobs connecting 25 Birmingham neighborhoods with 32 bus stops.

We have and will continue to think creatively about partnerships to help our residents move across the City and the region. Our on-demand ride pilot that was launched in Fall 2019 has completed over 32,000 rides, enhancing on-time access to healthy food, healthcare and education.

We also have been intentional in our focus on the roads themselves. We have completed more than \$28 million in roadway resurfacing, with an unprecedented \$10 million in road paving projects planned for 2021. My FY22 budget designates \$10 million to road paving alone, part of a \$14 million investment slated for neighborhood revitalization. We've also focused on lighting investments and restored lighting at the Green Springs Avenue interchange with I-65, University Boulevard interchange with I-65, I-59/20 from Arkadelphia to the western City limits, portions of I-459 at US 280, and worked with ALDOT to install lighting associated with the rebuild of the I-59/20 bridges through downtown.

**13. Birmingham consistently ranks as one of the top two cities in the nation with the highest energy burden (i. e. the percentage of income spent on electric bills). This burden disproportionately affects low-income and fixed-income Birmingham residents. Would you address the root causes of this issue and if so, how?**

Addressing the root causes of utility bills are beyond our control as rates for utilities are controlled by the Alabama Public Service Commission. What we can do is continue to fully leverage our federal resources for energy and water utility assistance for our low-income residents and ensure that our local support organizations have the information they need from Washington and Montgomery in order to help residents pay their utility bills. Only sustained advocacy efforts in Montgomery can actually lower utility rates, and I fully support efforts to do so.

**14. 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 mayor, how would you address crime and public safety?**

We have made significant progress in fighting crime. We have reduced serious violent and property crime by almost 33% since I took office, and I'm putting money where I need to keep driving that number down. The city is also completing our Real-Time Crime Center this summer, investing in community-based violence interruption teams that can help prevent violent gun crimes, expanding our investment in BPD's Homicide section, constantly revisiting our deployment strategies to ensure that our officers are in the right place at the right time, and the developing and implementing a comprehensive public safety plan for our HABD residents.

Birmingham is a national leader in police oversight and accountability. The tragic deaths of far too many forced every city in America to look inward, and we took action through our Public Safety Task Force and establishing the city's first ever Community Review Board. The Task Force produced a series of oversight and accountability reforms that we continue to see through, including prohibiting BPD from high-risk raids that killed Breonna Taylor, adopting model use of force standards and training, funding non-police responders to non-violent calls for services, and funding for an independent monitor to oversee the implementation of recommendations and policies regarding training, discipline, use of force, and best practices.

We have made progress by establishing the country's only Office of Peace and Policy to holistically address the root causes of crime. Our Office of Peace and Policy, which operates under the Office of Social Justice and Racial Equity, coordinates the non-policing aspects of public safety, including our programming for our returning residents like the Tuhska Lusa Initiative (the City's first peace strategy with a public health orientation toward reducing crime), marijuana decriminalization initiatives like Pardons for Progress, and our Public Safety Task Force for reimagining policing, oversight, and accountability in Birmingham. Similarly, we are proud to have partnered with the faith community by forming the Interfaith Roundtable within the Division of Social Justice and Racial Equity, which has been instrumental in CrimeStoppers fundraising, COVID messaging and outreach, prayers for Cupcake McKinney and other efforts like Freedom Fest.

We also announced a Gun Violence Task Force that takes an all-hands-on deck effort to reduce gun violence. Further following recommendations from the Public Safety Task Force, my office announced a Gun Violence Task Force in April 2021 that partners federal and local officials to facilitate information sharing and help us identify trends in gun trafficking so we can confiscate more guns and keep them off of our streets.

Finally, we partner with local, community-based organizations to make equitable public safety a reality for all. The newest budget will continue the City's work to get as many guns off the streets as possible, including by providing money to support the Gun Violence Task Force and local community organizations like Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity hosting gun buyback programs.

**15. What would your approach be to immigration enforcement in Birmingham? How would this approach affect Birmingham Police Department policy? Would you and your administration continue to collaborate with ICE?**

Birmingham is a welcoming city -- we would never ask for someone's immigration status, and our work goes beyond not just limiting our cooperation with DHS and ICE, but taking a holistic approach to making sure our immigrant communities are welcomed into Birmingham's diverse fabric. That means supporting young people with access to quality education -- which now, with the FY2022 budget, includes mental health care providers in schools -- and supporting families' access to affordable housing.

Immigrants are a central part of who we are as Americans, Alabamians and Birminghamians, and I remain committed to making sure Birmingham is a fair, equitable and inclusive city where everyone can work, live and thrive.

The Birmingham Police Department already limits cooperation with DHS and ICE in enforcing federal immigration policy, and that policy would not change under my leadership.