



## **Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire**

*The following questions present an opportunity to learn more about your views on key community issues and your vision for the City of Dallas. **Please complete and return no later than 11:59PM on Monday, February 20, 2023.** All candidate questionnaires will be published on our website. Late questionnaires will not be accepted for endorsement evaluation.*

### **1. What are the top 3 issues facing your district?**

As I have been meeting with constituents around the district, the same issues continue to rise to the top of the list.

- (1) District 14 residents are concerned about police and fire departments that are still not fully funded and not appropriately staffed. Despite some overall promising statistics concerning crime for the city as a whole, District 14 residents still have concerns over crimes to both person and property. Property crimes have definitely been highly problematic and certain communities have also experienced an increase in random gunfire incidents. Citizens desire to live in a safe environment, and safety is a prominent concern for our residents.
- (2) District 14 residents are also concerned about public works infrastructure, desiring real solutions to a comprehensive plan for streets, sidewalks, etc. Citizens in our district feel as though they pay a premium in taxes and should have quality streets on which to travel and sidewalks on which to safely walk. Many district citizens feel that the city is failing them in this area.
- (3) District 14 residents are also concerned about the rising cost of housing. Property appraisals only continue to climb, so many homeowners in this district want to ensure that as appraisal values rise, leaders will be cognizant of the need to continue lowering property tax rates. Of equal concern is the rising cost of rent for tenants.

### **2. What are the top 3 policy priorities you plan to advocate for in the first 90 days of your term?**

In the first 90 days of my term, I can honestly say that my primary focus would be on finalizing priorities for the district as to the bond election. This will be a crucial time to make sure that we are allocating dollars toward improvements that satisfy the basic needs of citizens first, before focusing on elaborate pet projects with a lot of bells and whistles. At the top of my list would be requests for dollars toward street infrastructure and public safety facilities. As to a change in policy, I would propose an amendment to the city's requirement that property owners pay for ½ of the cost of sidewalk replacement. This is a cost prohibitive measure, especially for seniors and those citizens on a fixed



## **Black American Futures PAC**

income, and it keeps our neighborhoods sitting with crumbling sidewalks that are not safely walkable. This is an area that needs a complete overhaul.

### **3. How have you contributed toward the reduction of crime and incarceration throughout your career?**

My career has largely centered on the area of residential real estate sales. In that profession, I have proudly focused my skills and talents on securing housing for over 500 clients (of all socio-economic levels), not only through home ownership but also through rental agreements. I also acted as a property manager for a small apartment complex in a low-income community, working to ensure that each resident had a safe and habitable home in which to live. It might not seem like much, but every individual that I touched became part of the greater picture of housing security, which is one of the major appendages needed to support a healthy community body, translating to a reduction in problems like crime and incarceration.

### **4. What can a Councilperson do to affirm Black residents' trust in local government?**

Trust, under any circumstance, begins with honoring your word and living up to what you say you are going to do. This is true in relationships with any community, be it black, brown or white. Too often, elected officials say one thing and then do another. So, being accountable to one's own word is the foundation upon which an entire trust structure is built. Beyond that, and specifically as to the question of Black residents, the Council member must take the lead in reaching out to those constituents, not sitting back to wait for them to engage. The Council member hosts the table, and it is his/her responsibility to invite residents of that community to sit at that table. One excellent way to do this is to appoint a diverse slate of citizens to boards and commissions. The incumbent has fallen short in this area, in my opinion, selecting primarily appointees of Anglo ethnicity. When you honor your word, and then constituents also see that you actually act upon a commitment to inclusion, through examples such as appointee choice, trust is magnified. A good Council member, though, must also always ensure that these same qualities spill over into other areas outside of the Council office, both in hiring practices throughout the city but also in how city-run departments interact with the Black community. It is also a must to have regular training on the subject of inclusion and diversity in all departments.

### **5. What will make your tenure on the council different from your predecessor's (if you are an incumbent, your previous term)? Specifically, what aspects of the previous two years would you like to see change/have done differently? What are your priorities going forward?**

One of the primary reasons that I am running in District 14 is to drastically increase the level of communication and on-the-ground engagement between the Council office, neighborhoods and key community partners such as our police, fire fighters, EMS and schools. The incumbent has fallen flat in



## **Black American Futures PAC**

this area, and constituents speak to this problem across our district. My first priority will be to actually be visibly present and then, second, to listen to all constituents, valuing and respecting their challenges and needs, rather than catering to a select few friends and colleagues. I will also not shy away from holding city staff accountable to follow through in a timely manner in both the more general area of responsiveness and the more specific area of project completion. The Council is unique in that it exists to support city staff in any way feasible to execute the functions of the city, but, at the same time, it is also the checkpoint for holding staff accountable to citizens, as each Council member is the representative voice of the people. My priority will be to act as a firm hand in ensuring that every citizen is receiving the highest caliber of service from its city government.

6. What role, if any, does socio-economic status (housing, education, poverty, and transportation, for example) contribute toward public safety?

More studies are beginning to suggest that poverty, in and of itself, does not necessarily lead to an increase in crime. Rather, when a person's socio-economic level is raised, he/she begins to evaluate decisions around conflict in a different way. Attributes like a more comprehensive education and security in basic life needs, such as housing, food and transportation, are typically tethered to a higher socio-economic status. This creates a greater risk of loss, then, for a person in an elevated class who chooses conflict as a means-to-an-end approach, as opposed to an alternative less destructive option. Remedies such as civil suits, for instance, become a more affordable option for those in the middle to upper classes, providing for a way to seek resolution within the law. In short, a rise in socio-economic status creates a more secure outlook on options for handling challenging circumstances. This naturally, then, translates to less crime and less conflict within communities, which strengthens public safety for the whole.

7. How do we remedy the historical and systemic injustices experienced by Black Americans in Dallas?

Remedying injustice is a futile notion without first adopting a commitment to the acknowledgment that injustice exists. Those in leadership must acknowledge injustices and speak of them, so that many will hear. In the late spring of 2020, while serving on the Dallas Park and Recreation Board, I connected with the now late Dr. George Keaton, Jr. He was having a lot of trouble trying to overcome hurdles with the city on placement of a marker in recognition of the lynching of Allen Brooks, as part of a project in cooperation with the Equal Justice Initiative. He was also running out of time to make the deadline for placement of the marker. We put our heads together, and with the help of Kay Kallos, with the Office of Arts and Culture, we pushed on park staff to consider placement of the marker in Pegasus Plaza. This would be a location nearest to the actual site of the event, and, because it was on park land and in my district, would also allow for a more seamless approval through the Park Board than trying to jump through all the hoops of trying to place it on other city property. Through this collaboration, the memorial plaque now exists to educate all citizens. These are just the types of initiatives, surrounding acknowledgment, that begin to break down the walls of injustice. I don't pretend to have all the



## **Black American Futures PAC**

answers to remedying historical and systemic injustices, but I know that I can be a steadfast promoter of acknowledgment, which lays the groundwork for plotting the appropriate map to equity. I can then work with my colleagues to help develop solutions toward actual remediation.

8. As Dallas develops, affordable housing continues to be a pain-point in communities of color. Black communities and other communities of color are seeing themselves priced out of areas with generations of family history in order to welcome in expensive developments and more white, affluent residents. What are your plans for equitable development and protections for residents being disproportionately impacted by these projects?

I would focus on establishing greater incentive programs for public/private partnerships to increase additional affordable rental stock, along with the development of home rehab and repair programs for means-tested homeowners in our communities.

9. The Black community experiences lower education performance compared to their peers. While the Dallas ISD board takes leadership over the schools, what opportunities do you see, from a city perspective, to support efforts made by our schools to close racial disparity gaps in educational attainment and proficiency scores?

I believe after school programs are vitally important for children in helping to close gaps. I believe our Dallas Park and Recreation Department is doing a good job in terms of offering programs to children, in partnership with DISD, for after school enrichment and education enhancement, but a comprehensive evaluation is likely needed to understand exactly who is taking advantage of these programs and if some children are being left behind and why. We have good community engagement and outreach, that is already on the right path with these programs, but there is always room for improvement. I would start here first.

10. Economic access and opportunity have continued to be issues politicians have campaigned on but have failed to completely deliver for the Black community. What are your plans to increase access to jobs, training, and other opportunities to ensure greater economic progress in the Black community?

Economic progress is often generational, and I think we are missing the boat when it comes to recruitment from our own pool of high school graduates. We should be focusing on this next generation now. I would love to see the city sponsor recruitment fairs, for not only entry level city employment but also for recruitment into our police and fire departments. These recruitment events



## **Black American Futures PAC**

could also be open to outside industries as well. There are many paths to greater economic progress that do not require extensive and expensive higher education, but rather often only require some limited hours of community college credit and on-the-job training. We should be physically seeking out these young people to help them open the door to various life-path options. This means that we go to them, at their schools...not just post that a job fair is open at a city location.

11. Reliable and affordable transportation options are critical for the sustainable growth and development of communities. Whether it is DART, our major streets and thruways, or walking/biking paths, Black residents depend on access to build community, work, and thrive. What are your plans to improve effectiveness of and access to transportation for Black communities and residents?

With the recent census data, I would want to ensure that our public transportation system follows a current evaluation of exactly where the greatest needs are now. As communities change and grow, systems within those communities must also change as well. Transportation is one of those systems. I am also a huge proponent of our trail system, having served as the Park Board liaison to the Circuit Trail Conservancy and now as a current board member of Friends of Santa Fe Trail. I want to keep building on that system, not just in affluent communities, but in all communities in order to provide additional modes of transportation by bicycle, as well as on foot. But beyond all of this, quality street infrastructure is imperative for motorists who are just trying to keep their vehicles as operational as possible, because their transportation is the key to their livelihood.

12. Broadband internet, especially since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, has become increasingly key to access education, the economy, and community. Many residents lack reliable access in a city where technology is available and the industry is thriving. What are your plans to increase affordable access to broadband internet for Black communities?

I believe that we can begin with providing WiFi access in as many city buildings as possible. The Park Department has done a good job, since COVID, of providing available access in Rec Centers, and a handful of Aquatic Centers, but this can certainly be expanded upon. I could also see that, just as local churches operate within the city as listed warming/cooling centers, the city could encourage more churches and civic centers to participate as local WiFi hub spots for area residents.

13. Equity, as a focus area, continues to be part of the ongoing conversation around policy and advocacy. Please define equity and how the term guides your thinking on policy decisions.

Equity is not the same as equality. Equity is the idea that you are trying to achieve the same end result for all participants but with a recognition that not all participants begin at the same starting point. Equitability encompasses the notions of fairness and justice but accounts for adjustments surrounding



## **Black American Futures PAC**

imbalances or systemic inequalities. Policy, therefore, when thinking from an equitable standpoint, is often much more multi-layered than just equality policy.

14. Environmental Justice is critical to elevating communities which have received a disproportionate share of the impact of industry and development. What have you done and/or plan to do to improve the environment and access to greenspace in Black Communities.

Staying on track with the implementation of even more Cool School projects, within communities of color, as championed by the Trust for Public Land, is vitally important, in my opinion. This initiative has mapped out areas across our city where parks can be located on school grounds, in order to give as many residents as possible the opportunity to live within a 10-minute walk of a community park/greenspace. I also believe that continuing to promote the approval of new commercial development that includes greenspace as a design component is crucial to creating a better balance between communities and development in general.

15. Maternal mortality among Black women is high compared to their counterparts, and access to essential health care materials and services is an ongoing challenge for Black women in particular. How have you worked to address this critical issue and/or plan to do so if elected.

I believe in transparency, so I will be fully transparent in saying that this is an issue that I have not even thought about. I know that the city needs a more collaborative relationship with the county, when it comes to many aspects of healthcare, but I would need to do more research into this topic to put forth a credible answer. I'm glad that you have listed this question, though, because it now gives me a new area to explore!

## **Belief Statements**

*To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with the following statements? Please include a detailed explanation for your response.*

1. Ensuring equitable access to the economy for all residents is a responsibility of the City Council.

I somewhat agree with this statement. This is limited, insofar as it is only applicable to the areas of government covered under the City Charter. Within those boundaries, however, Council should always be diligent in ensuring that access is available to all citizens, regardless of background, ethnicity or socio-economic status.



## **Black American Futures PAC**

### 2. Socio-economic factors play a significant role in education, public safety, and public health.

I absolutely agree with this statement. An advancement in one's socio-economic status affords not only additional monetary resources for that person, but it also generally widens the acutely important resource of time. Citizens in lower socio-economic brackets are heavily squeezed when it comes to time availability, often working multiple jobs to make ends meet and sometimes trying to run households as single parents, with very little time to invest in anything else. As a person moves up the socio-economic ladder, and the acquiring of monetary resources becomes less of a burden, free time increases to allow for the addition of more balanced life aspects like focused education for both adults and children, preventative healthcare choices, general exercise and the inclusion of positive quality of life elements. As I mentioned above, in another answer, all these factors then translate into a life path where one is less likely to choose conflict as an option, which ends in safer communities for everyone.

### 3. The future of a city depends on the collective advancement of all residents and all communities.

In 1786, Thomas Reid coined the phrase, "A chain is no stronger than its weakest link," in his publication entitled, "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man." I would argue that this is a universal truth. The success of every individual is crucial to the success of the entire collective, and this will determine the strength of our city and its future for decades to come. This requires that those in government first acknowledge all residents and all communities, then allow for seats at the table and voices to be heard for all and then continue to remember all those voices when crafting policy.

**Thanks for completing our questionnaire. If there is anything else you'd like to share with voters about yourself or your campaign, please use the space below to do so:**

I truly feel a passion for this type of civic work, helping citizens to better their lives in any way that I can. Oftentimes, people seek elected office to "be" someone instead of to "do" something. Throughout my entire life, I have focused on "doing" the next right and good thing, no matter where my hands were volunteering. I believe in working hard, with a boots-on-the-ground attitude of engaging every day within the communities of my district. I have a true love for Dallas. My ancestors came here in the late 1800s and built something of themselves by striving in any way that they could, driving bread trucks, picking cotton on farmland outside of the city, literally laying the foundation of some of our city's first buildings, by working in construction, and supporting the education of their children and the forming of their church congregations. I believe an essence of them remains in me, to this day, and I am so very honored to be running for the District 14 City Council seat. I appreciate the opportunity to complete this questionnaire, and I wish the Black American Futures Pac much success!