

Candidate for 3rd District at Large Wallace Hartsfield, II



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- 1. Each candidate brings a passion for office and special skills to help them succeed. Describe what drives you most to run for office, your qualifications and skills, and why we should elect you versus your opponent. Include any current endorsements.**

As a pastor, professor and community advocate, I have spent my professional life working to improve the lives of others. I want to bring these skills to city hall to work on behalf of 3rd District residents and all residents in Kansas City. While we have seen several important signs of progress happening in our city, I have also seen areas of our city where that progress is not yet being felt. I believe we have an opportunity with the new mayor and new council to finally focus on raising the standards and improving the quality of life for all Kansas City residents. I understand that this work will not be easy and we need committed and responsible leadership that can bring together a governing majority both in city hall and within the community. I have a clear record of bringing people together sometimes as a leader, facilitator, and participant but always with an intentional focus on collaborating to getting things done.

- 2. If elected, what will your top 3 priorities be in your first year of office? Name 3 things you plan to accomplish during your term.**

Crime Prevention- Engaging previous perpetrators of crime, providing more public health funding, strengthening police department social worker program, investing in youth targeted projects

To address affordable housing needs by encouraging mixed-income developments like in the Historic Northeast and increasing the number of set-asides in the market rate. We must collectively commit to reforming the way development incentives are awarded in our city. These incentives first and foremost must be used to help improve housing safety and affordability.

Equitable Economic Development- providing more resources to small businesses, strengthening job training programs, investing in entrepreneurship. We must commit to closing the wealth gap in our city and create real pathways to economic opportunity for all Kansas City residents especially those on the east side of our city.

3. Over the last decade, Kansas City has experienced so many positive changes, but the murder rate and number of violent crimes are still major issues. What suggestions do you have for reducing crime in Kansas City?

I am committed to ensuring every resident has the opportunity to live in communities free of violence. Violent crime is a systemic issue and is the result of the deep culture of economic despair. We should be engaging those that have been perpetrators of crime to understand the culture. Solutions often fail due to a lack of understanding of the issue. So we must understand the challenges. Also, we should be increasing public health funding and assisting the police department with strengthening their social worker programs. We need to invest in more youth activity based projects in the urban core. Finally, we need to invest in our cultural institutions (Bruce R. Watkins, Black Archives, Satchel Paige Stadium etc.) to combat this sense of hopelessness and directionless behavior.

4. The limited availability of affordable housing and limited access to public transportation options make it challenging for low-income residents to find stable housing and employment opportunities. Likewise, employers describe difficulties filling jobs and finding stable employees because housing, transportation and distance to work. How do you propose to increase affordable housing and access to employment opportunities in Kansas City?

We must find a way to utilize our incentive tools to encourage developers to provide affordable housing units. I believe the 75 million dollar housing trust fund passed by the current city council is a good start to addressing our affordable housing crisis. However, as we know the trust fund has no funding source. I will be advocating for the developers who commit to provide affordable housing units are required to make a financial contribution to the housing fund. The required contribution will not be a penalty. As we know that we cannot deter new development but we want any developer or investor to know that we believe the best city is a city, which works for everyone. That is the kind of city Kansas Citians want to live in.

5. **Many citizens are still confused about what the approved GO Bonds will fund, how moneys are being used, when improvements are expected, property owner responsibilities in the interim, and whether there are still shortfalls in funding. This has led to unrealistic expectations, mis-information and frustration. How would you propose to educate the community, and improve communication and transparency about projects and schedules?**

The GO Bond is a timely opportunity to help us improve the existing infrastructure. Unfortunately, large portions of these funds are being deployed to new projects at the expense of existing roads and bridges. We need to educate the community about the purpose of this fund, improve communication, transparency and accountability of these funds. I plan to always be very visible throughout the city. I believe no matter where you live or whether you are in-district/at-large you should spend time all over the city. Many times what is a concern on Prospect is a concern on Main Street. What is a concern on Ward Pkwy is a concern in the Northland. In short, boots on the ground all over the city is the best way to educate the community, improve communication and transparency.

6. **The condition of roads, curbs and sidewalks is a major issue for the City. Developers and property owners often cite infrastructure as a major issue impacting property values, development feasibility and decisions about private investment. Likewise, the perception of well-established centers like Brookside or re-emerging corridors like Troost are impacted by crumbling infrastructure. How would you propose to prioritize infrastructure for established and emerging areas versus infill or new infrastructure? What ideas do you have for additional funding to address shortfalls?**

Asking a question about priorities is really a question about vision. My vision requires us to have tough conversations concerning the long-term health of Kansas City. We must prioritize based upon a long-term strategy. The areas not only of the most need but also that will make Kansas City a complete city must be at the top of the list. I will prioritize based upon a long-term strategy. Ultimately, any solution or strategy we propose to address infrastructure, infill, new development and rehab will have long-term implications. We must keep in mind the vision we have set forth.

Unless, we receive state and federal funding everyone will be required to chip in to address local issues, our issues. That means developers, new residents and homegrown residents. Everyone will be required to do more work. These are our issues and I believe we should fix them.... We'll have to be more creative in balancing the budget, make bold budget decisions, tax proposals and tax incentive use. Everything must be on the table if we are to fix our budget issues.

- 7. Illegal dumping, neglected properties, and deferred maintenance are major issues. The City's limited resources often mean these issues go unaddressed for long periods impacting the surrounding community. How do you propose to deter bad actors and improve enforcement?**

The physical condition of local communities is a powerful indicator of the sense of wellbeing of residents in these communities. Litter and trash is one of the number one complaints we hear from residents. We must work with partners to improve the culture of litter in communities while also not being afraid to take action against persons who dump trash in the community. While we need to improve code enforcement and the 311 action center staff, we also have to create additional opportunities for residents to responsibly dispose of garbage and "bulky" items. We should consider strategies such as increasing the frequency of curbside pickup and the quantity of trash each household is allowed to put out.

- 8. Vacant, abandoned, and run-down buildings and housing can attract crime and destabilize surrounding areas. Likewise, the vacant lots left behind after demolition can have the same impact. What do you propose to address vacant/abandoned, run-down buildings / housing and to stabilize the surrounding areas?**

A strategy of indiscriminately tearing down houses often in historic communities does not solve the problem. I propose to help neighborhoods articulate a vision and identify the resources to improve these properties to promote community stabilization and revitalization. We need to more aggressively pursue federal and state funding (CDBG Funds, HOME Funds) for home renovation and community development.

- 9. The delivery and cost of basic City services including sewer, water, trash collection, and snow removal affect us all. What suggestions do you have to improve and maintain city services without major financial impacts to residents?**

For low-income residents, the growing cost of utilities creates a unique burden on already stretched household budgets. In fact, the emerging evidence suggests that the high cost of utilities is primarily responsible for residents getting trapped in high interest loans. I believe we must consider the impact of utility on the ability of Kansas City families to support the basic necessities before rates are indiscriminately increased. We should consider programs such as those aimed at helping residents reduce waste, and programs to help residents improve household energy conservation as possible strategies for decreasing utilization and costs.

- 10. Tax incentives have helped spark new investments but have come under scrutiny for use for high-end projects and projected impacts to taxing districts. At the same time, real incentives can be warranted in distressed areas or for rehabilitation where development and reinvestment are challenging. Would you propose to modify tax incentive policies, and if so how? If so, how would you help ensure investment in distressed areas like Troost Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, and 63rd Street is encouraged and what incentives or other tools would you support using?**

I actually do not believe tax incentives themselves should be modified but rather the use of the tax incentives is what should be called in to question. One way we can encourage the proper use of tax incentives is by redefining blight. I would actively go out and seek projects that are needed by the community and fit into the long-term vision for our city. I believe all tax incentives should be on the table as long as the developers can prove through a detailed analysis of the impact it will have in meeting the community needs.

- 11. A lot of resources are dedicated to attracting large companies, but statistics show that Kansas City's small businesses create more new jobs and have a more financial impact on the local community. How will you help foster and support small businesses, and minority and women owned businesses, in addition to working to attract major employers? Any suggestions on how incentives or resources might be better weighted toward small businesses?**

I will help small businesses and large corporations by first identifying what they need and then connecting the dots. As I've said before, I am very familiar with working with different people and finding areas of compromise to come to an equitable solution. That experience will prove to be very helpful in arenas such as these were one-sided solutions are not doable. Through my experience I also know that more often than not the lack of organization collaboration is a matter of people not communicating with each other. It's not because either party doesn't want to work together it's because people are busy! Therefore, they begin to operate in silos. I see my role as being a facilitator and advocate of a strategy that supports a broad spectrum of business development.

- 12. The 1/8th Central City Economic Development Sales Tax is intended to help a portion of the City's distressed neighborhoods and commercial corridors but doesn't include several fringe areas just outside the sales tax district like Troost Avenue or Marlborough Heights. What incentives, programs or support do you propose to help other distressed areas, or areas on the fringe? Do you support the creation of similar districts or use of other tools, and if so, how would you fund them?**

The 1/8th Cents Sales Tax was a self-imposed. Therefore, I believe if other areas of the city want to see similar economic development tools then they should be allowed to do so. I strongly support neighborhood land trust. This is where a neighborhood owns land and controls how the land is developed. This provides neighborhoods with leverage in attracting developers. As they could go directly to a developer, communicate their desires

and needs then come to a reasonable agreement with the developer to bring the project to life.

- 13. Community Improvement Districts have helped improve several KC areas including commercial districts and neighborhoods through cleaning, security, added maintenance, promotion and other efforts. However, the use of CIDs has come under scrutiny when used for single properties or when controlled solely by development interests. Do you support the use of CIDs, would you propose any limits or conditions, and if not supported, what other tools would you propose be used to achieve improvements?**

I support CIDs as long as they are agreed upon by a majority of the organizations within the proposed boundaries. I believe we have tools now that are available to residents it is just that residents are unaware due to the lack of community engagement on the part of the city or the opportunities that are available for residents to advocate for the need of their neighborhoods are not scheduled at times which are accommodating to residents. That is why I will take a look at moving meetings or schedule additional meetings for residents to be heard.

- 14. Many projects like redevelopment of City property at 63rd and Prospect require long-term support and coordination across multiple council districts. How do you plan to work with other council members to address these types of issues? Do you have any suggestions on how to energize stalled projects like at 63rd and Prospect?**

The delay of projects in historically marginalized communities reinforces that narrative that residents in these communities do not matter. This must be something we collectively commit to changing. In the same way that we demand that projects downtown and the plaza advance expeditiously, we must show similar concern for the project at 63rd and Prospect. I plan to engage residents and area stakeholders of this project and create a venue for them to share their stories directly with my colleagues on the council. As I have done the past, I plan to build a coalition that once and for all move this project to completion.

- 15. Kansas City's population has been affected by the limitations and perceptions of public education. Alternatives and improvements are helping change that perception. Although the City has limited authority, what are some ways you would propose to help foster improvements and collaboration around education?**

I believe to foster improvement and collaboration requires developing a trusting relationship with those whom you wish partner. That requires spending time with people. The best solution to moving the needle on any project begins with building relationships. In addition to attending formal meetings, I will plan informal gatherings and just visit with our education leaders. We all want Kansas City to be an attractive place to live. We all know that education is one of the barriers. So we'll need to hear all the proposals and take the best of each proposal and try it out.

- 16. Elected officials have to balance time needed to make change, with need to engage the community and be available to constituents. Likewise, there has been recent frustration over limited public engagement in some major projects and initiatives. How would you propose to remain available to constituents and to work with organizations like ours, area neighborhoods, and other major stakeholders if elected?**

When I'm elected I will spend a lot of time in the community. I will be at meetings and gatherings. Most times I plan to listen. The times in which I choose to chime in I'll make sure to share that I am another voice in the room. Meaning we'll talk through this issue, that each residents voice holds the same weight as mine, and when the discussion is over what I take to the floor of city council chambers will be solutions that are amalgamations of all that has been said.

- 17. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about you or how you would serve?**

Over the past 50 years, the life expectancy and economic outlook for residents in the 3rd District has not improved. In fact, the data suggest the outcome for these residents have declined. I believe we have an opportunity in this election with the new mayor and council to begin to review these devastating trends. I am running for the council because I believe this is something our city must do.