

## Candidate for Mayor Jolie Justus



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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.**

For the last 16 years, I have served as the Director of Pro Bono Services at my law firm where I oversee the free legal services we provide throughout our community. In that work, we represent some of Kansas City's most vulnerable citizens, including kids in the foster care and juvenile justice systems.

My work with children in the courtroom led me to run for office for the first time in 2006. I was done trying to clean up messes on the back end and ran for a seat in the Missouri Senate to try to address these challenges at the legislative level. I was successful in that race and spent eight years in Jefferson City working on improving the foster care system, reforming the criminal justice system, and fighting for Kansas City.

When I reached my term limit in the Senate, I knew I wasn't done serving the people of Kansas City, so I ran for City Council. Since I was elected four years ago, I have championed legislation to help domestic violence survivors, fought to implement equitable transportation and development policies, and led the charge for a new, single-terminal KCI, which will never cost taxpayers a single penny.

I am committed to making Kansas City a place where thriving, diverse neighborhoods are home to individuals of all backgrounds who are raising families, building careers, getting an education, enjoying retirement, or simply loving everything the city has to offer. Kansas

City is on a roll right now, but too many families and neighborhoods have not shared in that success.

There are two main differences between my opponent and me. First, we have different visions for Kansas City. My opponent believes that we have to stop focusing on big-picture projects like KCI and the revitalization of downtown and only focus on the basics. I fundamentally believe that we can and we must be able to do them both at the same time. In order to have the revenue to address crumbling infrastructure, violent crime, and all of the other issues facing our community, we must continue to retain and attract new residents.

And the second difference is that for the last 20 years, first as a pro bono lawyer and then as a public servant, I've demonstrated a track record of getting things done for Kansas City. Whether it was rewriting the Missouri Criminal Code to make us smarter on crime or leading the fight for a new, single-terminal KCI, I have been showing up, bringing diverse voices to the table, and getting things done. That's exactly the kind of Mayor I'll be for Kansas City.

I am honored that the following groups and individuals endorse my candidacy: Mayor Sly James, former Mayor Kay Barnes, former Mayor Charlie Wheeler, Councilman Kevin McManus, Mamie Hughes, CiCi Rojas, Patty Garney, St. Louis-Kansas City Carpenters Regional Council, Promoting Equality for All Missourians (PROMO), Greater KC Women's Political Caucus, The Call, LPAC, Human Rights Campaign, EMILY's List, LGBTQ Victory Fund, United Steelworkers District 11, Forward KC, Teamsters, United Auto Workers Region V, IBEW Local 53, IBEW 124, Communication Workers of America Local 6360, AFSCME Local 500, Bricklayers Local 15, Greater KC Building and Construction Trades Council, Laborers Union Local 663, Jackson County Legislator Scott Burnett, Jackson County Legislator Crystal Williams, Kite Singleton, former MO State House Democratic Leader Gail McCann Beatty, Rep. Greg Razer, Councilman Dan Fowler, Rep. Judy Morgan, Mario Rojas, former Councilman Bill Skaggs, former Sen. Phil Snowden, former Rep. Jeremy LaFaver, Councilman Jermaine Reed, former Rep. Beth Low-Smith.

**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.**

"In the first year of my term, I intend to:

Name a Chief Neighborhoods Officer, who will be directly responsible for working with neighborhood leaders and residents and reporting back to the Mayor and City Manager. It's time for staffing at City Hall to reflect a commitment to our neighborhoods.

Create a municipal Department of Transportation by reorganizing current staff and departments to coordinate and execute transportation-related planning and services. For too long, our infrastructure planning and implementation have been in different departments. We have to do better to repair our crumbling sidewalks and roads and a

Department of Transportation is the first step toward better coordination of those investments.

Introduce an ordinance to reform economic incentives to make sure that the city and its residents are receiving a clearly defined benefit in exchange for its investment in development projects. For too long, downtown has received the bulk of the benefit of our economic development incentives policies.

The top 3 priorities of my first term include:

1. Confront and Reduce Violent Crime

Since you ask for specifics in your next question, I will provide details there; however, you should know that reducing the violent crime rate is top on my list of priorities.

2. Economic Development that Creates One City

Pivot from the Downtown-oriented economic development focus to a broad-based effort to strengthen residential neighborhoods, transportation, and job-based economic growth. Rather than concentrating on large projects in “redevelopment islands,” I want to see “redevelopment corridors,” which include housing, transit, and commercial elements.

3. Improve Education Availability Throughout the City

While the city charter does not provide formal authority to the mayor over education policy, but an effective mayor will work to encourage school districts to work together toward common goals; “a rising tide lifts all boats.” I believe that more effective education will foster more vigorous economic growth and reduce crime.

**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?**

As part of my Neighborhoods First Agenda, I support the following anti-violent crime policy initiatives:

*Create a Fairer Criminal Justice System*

As a State Senator, I worked with stakeholders and helped lead the fight across the state to craft criminal justice reform legislation that directly impacts our community, including a complete revision of the Missouri Criminal Code and the Justice Reinvestment Act. By bringing people from all over the state together to find common ground, I succeeded in securing passage of reform legislation that significantly updated state laws for the first time in decades.

This legislation has started us down the path of putting the right people in prison – not just mass incarceration -- and making sure we have opportunities for people when they re-

enter our community. I'm proud to report that Missouri is leading the nation in the decline of our prison population and as mayor, I am prepared to continue that work at the local level.

*Address Mental Health and Public Health Issues*

Violent crime in our community is a public health issue, and I support evidence-based programs like the Kansas City No Violence Alliance, AIM for Peace, and programs that take a public health approach to prevent crime.

I understand that that means preventing crime before it happens by increasing funding for specialty court programs, re-entry services, and access to mental health and addiction services.

Crime prevention also means providing the necessary resources and support to the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) -- increasing the number of social workers and community interaction officers in each patrol division, while also increasing the number of police officers in the streets.

*Build on Our Progress*

On City Council, I chaired the Violent Crime Task Force and conducted ten public meetings in every corner of the city. The Task Force drafted recommendations that are being implemented and are already showing results, including:

Funding a Comprehensive Youth Master Plan with the Kansas City Health Department

*Filling a full-time Violent Crimes Program Coordinator position*

Working with state legislators to pass a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

Despite the success of these recommendations from the Violent Crime Task Force, there is still more work to do.

As mayor, I will continue to implement the recommendations of the task force and continue to work with leaders across the country to develop innovative solutions to our city's toughest problems.

*Support an Equitable and Diverse Police Force*

Kansas City's police force should be as diverse as Kansas City's neighborhoods. That means working with the KCPD to proactively recruit officers from diverse backgrounds who represent all of Kansas City.

It also means making sure that police department resources are distributed equitably around the city. No community should feel they're being ignored when it comes to safety. Additionally, increased cooperation and communication between the city, the police department, and the communities they protect will be critical regardless of the governance of the police department. As mayor, I will use my relationships – and firsthand experience -

- in Jefferson City to proactively work with officials and ensure that the police board functions at a high-level and reflects our diverse community.

#### *Embrace Data Driven Policing*

Kansas City has had success with its use of data-driven crime fighting, which has allowed it to target limited resources in the areas that need the most attention.

However, as technology evolves, so too must KCPD's use of technology. It's not enough to rely on the tools that have been successful over the past five years, we must embrace the technology that will pave the way for the next five years.

Also, the use of technology requires greater oversight to ensure the outcomes protect privacy and are not unfairly targeting groups of people by race or geography.

#### *Get Tough on Guns*

Throughout my career, I have fought to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. Although gun safety legislation is hard to push through Jefferson City, I earned the relationships and the experience to find areas of compromise – and identify where to take the initiative.

I will work with legislators in Jefferson City to identify issues of agreement. For example, allowing law enforcement or family members to red flag individuals who may be prone to violent behavior that poses a danger to themselves or others and temporarily removing their firearms from their possession is a measure that has generated support from both parties around the country.

- 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?**

I believe in an approach to an economic development policy that combines transportation, housing, and commercial growth elements.

We have a lack of affordable housing in our city. Compounding the challenge is the fact that, too often, affordable housing is not located on convenient transit lines or near job centers. On top of that, our city's eviction rates are the highest among our most vulnerable residents.

To address these issues, we must create, preserve, and stabilize our housing stock. Rather than demolish existing housing stock, we should try to restore vacant and abandoned properties and convert them into safe, affordable housing. Also, we must hold out-of-town landlords accountable for ensuring the safety and equitable treatment of renters. And, we

must stabilize existing housing by increasing public/private partnerships that provide home repair and legal assistance to keep individuals in their homes.  
We must continue to use every tool available to build new housing near job centers and transit lines.

### *Transportation*

An essential part of my Neighborhoods First agenda is creating a Kansas City where every resident is no more than 15 minutes away from a no-transfer (or limited transfer) ride to work, school, and essential community services.

I want a transportation system that goes beyond resolutions, policies, and goals and starts to prioritize funding, planning, and transportation infrastructure that is safe, equitable, and accessible, no matter how you move throughout the city.

To do that, I will create a Department of Transportation that brings existing transportation agencies under one roof to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency and reduce duplication of effort. This would not be a new bureaucracy, rather an improved organization of existing departments and agencies.

A city Department of Transportation will rationalize our infrastructure spending and construction while speeding the planning and execution of much-needed infrastructure improvements.

- 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?**

"Kansas City must do a better job communicating both the purpose and progress of the GO Bonds effort. Currently, the City Web site contains basic information and contact information related to the disbursement of GO Bond revenue but we can and must do better. Part of being a smart city is using the data we have at our fingertips to better inform our constituents about upcoming infrastructure repairs. With \$800 million on the line, we must ensure the public can hold City Hall accountable.

As mayor, I will issue annual reports on GO Bond-Go KC spending that provide specifics on what projects were undertaken, what was spent, where it was spent, and what's coming next. Kansas City voters approved that initiative and I take that direction from the voters very seriously. Every Kansas City resident should know exactly how we spend the Go KC money.

We also need to work with neighborhood association leaders and other community activists to build an understanding of how they can use the Public Improvements Advisory Committee (PIAC) system to multiply the impact of the Go KC project. Through planning, the receipts from the two funding sources deliver highly noticeable improvements in a much shorter timeframe. The Chief Neighborhood Officer should play a vital role in making this happen.

- 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?**

My Neighborhoods First Agenda calls for redevelopment corridors that combine transportation, housing, and commercial growth elements. This approach facilitates development and redevelopment by positioning employees and customers in easy reach of home, school work, and our small businesses.

As mentioned above, one of my top priorities in my first year is to create a city Department of Transportation to deliver vital infrastructure services more efficiently and effectively. The council has increased city expenditures on road maintenance after a long period of lean budgets, and I want that trend will continue. We have a considerable backlog of deferred maintenance projects that will still require attention.

In addition to the increased annual allocations, the Go KC revenue (existing maintenance) coupled with PIAC spending, will provide more resources. Still, I believe that the reorganization that will result in the city Department of Transportation will be a necessary improvement.

- 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?**

I was a strong supporter of bringing trash services in house after a failed decades-long experiment with contractors. Simply put, these contractors failed to deliver basic services to many of our residents, but especially our North and South KC citizens.

In addition, by bringing sanitation services back in-house, we will save money that I want to allocate for the restoration of curb-side bulky-item pick-up.

Sanitation, recycling, and the city codes that protect public health and safety represent essential services that citizens expect. As mayor, I will work to ensure that trash is picked up on time in every neighborhood.

- 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?**

When possible, I favor finding ways to return vacant and abandoned structures to our housing stock and tax rolls. At times, this will mean working more aggressively with non-profit groups, as well as using the Land Bank mechanism, which I helped to create when I served in the State Senate. Also, on City Council, I supported the creation of Housing Trust Fund, which might serve as a tool to fix this problem, however the Council has not identified a tool to provide revenue to the fund.

- 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?**

This is an issue that I will need to convey the need for improvement from the city manager. I have heard many complaints about snow removal when drivers compare Kansas City, Missouri city streets with road conditions immediately across State Line Road. Again, this is an issue that I will expect the Chief Neighborhood Officer to bring well-documented citizen feedback to my meetings with the city manager.

Water and sewer services remains a problem for many citizens, which presents a vexing problem without a clear solution. The increased cost of these services – due mainly to federal environmental standards that the city waited far too long to address – is a substantial burden on many households. I will need to provide oversight to the advancement of this project and remind the administrators that we need to identify practical efficiencies and apply any savings to rates first. You should understand that this issue is on my radar screen.

We must also avoid the temptation to adopt ""too good to be true"" proposals from private concerns. We do not want to go down the expensive and unhealthy road that Flint, Michigan, did by making rash decisions.



- 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 look at every tax incentive proposal with an eye toward what public interest the investment serves, and then I make a case-by-case judgment.

The public good component can manifest itself in many ways. Inclusion of green construction, public transit friendly design, or street-level retail space come to mind. I think we can all point to incentives granted in the past that we could have required more of developers, and we should learn from those imperfect decisions moving forward.

One of those lessons that I think we should learn from is to include enforceable claw-back provisions in all incentive agreements and use them. As a state senator in 2010, I shepherded legislation that provided incentives to keep auto sector jobs in Missouri – and we made sure that the statute included a robust claw-back mechanism in the case that automakers still closed the plants.

We also must keep real communications open with the taxing jurisdictions. No one benefits from ill-will or bad feelings that could have been avoided by sitting down and talking.

Goals should also include identifying East-West corridors to interact with the well-developed North-South corridor. The city's economic development initiatives can be used to build ""economic corridors"" between the "development islands" of the last twenty years. We need to connect the city together into one market – and remove the unfamiliarity and mistrust that come with dividing lines.

- 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?**

My Neighborhoods First Agenda phrased the same observation this way: "Chasing giant companies to get them to consider moving to Kansas City isn't a complete economic development strategy." I want to make it easier to start and grow new businesses in every Kansas City neighborhood, and I want to give workers and businesses quality of life

incentives to stay here. That means helping existing companies and industries grow, while also working to attract new businesses that will create more local jobs.

It may sound cliché, but one way we keep people here and attract good employees and business to this city is to make people feel welcome. We must confront decades of apprehension and misunderstanding that continue to hold us back. I embrace diversity, inclusion, and equality. I believe Kansas City will move forward together, or it will not achieve its full promise.

Also, we need to make progress fighting violent crime, and I have provided my thoughts on that issue in my answer to your Question 3. Reducing crime will make it easier to attract businesses, keep businesses, and maintain pools of employees and customers.

Furthermore, please consider my answer to your Question 15 concerning education issues as a partial but vital answer to this question. If we can keep the improvement in local education moving forward, coupled with the cost of living and quality of life issues that businesses and job candidates look at, I believe Kansas City could experience an historic economic boom.

- 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?**

I am open to considering support for similar proposals, but I have no plans to propose any. I understand that such arrangements could play a role in creating the Economic Corridors that I mentioned in my answer to Question 10. Before anything proposal came to me asking to raise revenue, I would want to see a solid plan and strict controls on how to spend the money in the public interest.

- 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 remain a strong proponent of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), but I am concerned about their abuses so far. Again, I look at each proposal on a case-by-case basis, as I do with recommendations for tax incentives; however, I would like to see more effective CIDs.

- 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?**

I believe we should move away from the “redevelopment islands” approach and shift to a strategy of “redevelopment corridors,” which include housing, transportation, and commercial elements. This approach, especially when executed on an East-West axis, can connect the city together – while dismantling some of the historical racial barriers that still divide this city. Shared economic growth gives citizens and businesses private incentives to work together and solve problems.

- 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?**

The city charter does not grant the mayor authority over education, but that does not mean a mayor cannot try to improve the educational system. Education enhances the living standards of the next generation, reduces crime, and increases property values – which, in turn, supports the educational system.

Schools buildings play a vital role in supporting the quality of life because they serve as our community meeting centers, they are after school activity centers, they are safe havens from stressful situations, they provide health care and nutrition, and they have the power to transform lives for the better.

So, if we want to push Kansas City’s success story into our neighborhoods, we should make sure we’re supporting the schools in those neighborhoods and the students and families who attend them.

#### *High-Quality Early Education*

Data shows that kids who enter kindergarten after attending high-quality pre-K are more likely to succeed throughout their academic career. In addition, high-quality early childhood education results in lower juvenile crime rates, a better educated and prepared workforce, and better outcomes for children and families.

The question in Kansas City is not whether we should make high-quality early education a priority. On that, there is a consensus. The question is how to do it. Failing to increase the number of Kansas City kids participating in high-quality pre-K is failing our kids, and it's also failing our city.

As a Missouri State Senator, I introduced legislation that would create statewide universal pre-K, but, unsurprisingly, it was impossible to get passed.

As mayor, I will bring together ALL of the stakeholders to find a path to expand existing high quality early learning opportunities and improve affordability.

### *Get Kids Reading*

Research shows that until the third-grade children are learning to read, but after the third-grade children read to learn.

That's why children who are not able to read at the appropriate grade level by the third grade are often left behind academically. It is the fork in the road that separates successful students from those who will struggle in school their entire lives.

As mayor, I will continue to support the successful Turn the Page KC program that convenes community leaders to find more ways to promote reading proficiency for kids in every neighborhood in the city.

I will also use the mayor's office as a platform to encourage city employees and private employers to support reading and literacy programs at their local schools. Reading to kids at an early age helps set them on the right path to reading proficiency.

### *Workforce Development and Job Training*

Education and training with a particular emphasis on job skills help make Kansas City a more competitive marketplace in the pursuit of economic growth and investment. Effective workforce development and job training require coordination between businesses, labor, education, public foundations, and philanthropies to improve opportunities for working men and women who are looking to change careers, re-enter the workforce, or expand their skills.

Kansas City can also do more by implementing STEM curricula in local schools and by supporting vocational and technical classes for students who are interested in developing trade skills.

- 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?**

As mayor, I will draw upon a network of neighborhood and community leaders, from across Kansas City, to expand the circle of people who participate in public service. Diverse participation in policymaking is critical.

Throughout my tenures as a State Senator and City Councilwoman, I have held weekly office hours where constituents have a chance to meet with me in a public location and

share their concerns. I plan to continue that initiative as Mayor. I have also pledged to hold at least one town hall in each council district during every year of my term.

Once again, I will mention my intention to name a Chief Neighborhood Officer. Let me make clear, the purpose of this position will never be to cede responsibility – much less the mayor's authority – to an appointee. The person who fills the position will conduct outreach and report back as an integrated part of the policy process – even when that means nagging, reminding, and insisting.

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

Reliably, effectively, and honestly.