



## **City of Joliet Questionnaire for 2023 District Candidates**

1. Please list your top three priorities / initiatives of action once elected.

### **Economic Development**

- Let's create a new strategic plan for District 4 that centers equitable local, state and federal funding for infrastructure investment and economic growth
- Let's create a vision for the potential redevelopment of the old Silver Cross Hospital site
- Let's develop a comprehensive set of policies and initiatives that support our small businesses in Joliet, such as an initiative that allows small businesses to improve their facades with the help of a city fund.

### **Safety & Security**

- Let's raise awareness about the reality of public safety in Joliet by connecting neighbors with law enforcement professionals who can relay real data and information on crime, as well as possible solutions and crime prevention tips.
- Let's create a centralized communications and community relations initiative for District 4 that will keep neighbors up to date on public safety issues.
- Let's create a fleshed out vision for real, impactful and effective community policing in Joliet that prioritizes crime prevention.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

- Let's be more vigilant about where taxpayer money is being spent in Joliet by emphasizing accountability during the budgeting process.
- Let's incorporate the input of residents into the city's budgeting process by holding more public meetings ahead of the council's final vote on budget authorization.
- Let's be more vigilant about ensuring that homeowners do not bear the brunt of property taxes through a variety of measures, including making sure they're taking advantage of various exemptions and that the city is attracting more commercial property taxpayers into District 4.

### **Faith-Based Initiatives**

- We need to work with Faith-Based Leaders and Pastors in the Districts that is designed to ensure that there's a line of communication between the city and District faith leaders.

2. What type of working relationship do you plan to have with neighborhood groups?

**I have already been working with the neighborhood groups. They are vital. One group came to me and needed support with lighting on the block and we recently called and lead energy night with COM ED**

**coming in an offering free assessments. There's needs that we can help with when we listen to these groups.**

3. Please share your thoughts on possible economic development opportunities within your district.

**Currently, Joliet relies on a range of tools to attract businesses. These include Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Enterprise Zones, Opportunity Zones and various tax incentives for downtown business owners. I believe tools like Enterprise Zone tax incentives TIF districts can be powerful drivers of development in historically disinvested areas of the City but only if the City is deliberate and aggressive about deploying them in these areas.**

**For example, Enterprise Zones allow qualifying businesses who are planning to establish businesses inside of them to apply for things like state sales tax exemptions and state utility tax exemptions. To get these incentives, businesses are required to "make the minimum statutory investments that create or retain a certain number of jobs,". The responsibility for ensuring that businesses comply with the required standards is on the local zone administrator. One drive through Joliet's east side is enough to prove that these incentives have not been adequate to address the widespread blight and underinvestment that characterizes some areas of the City. If elected, I would encourage the City to rethink how it is leveraging these tax incentives so that they're tools to drive more development to historically underdeveloped areas of the city and I would also encourage City officials to take a hard look at how we're ensuring local businesses comply with the standards necessary to get and keep tax incentives.**

4. What would you do to improve the overall safety of citizens in your district and in the City of Joliet?

**Crime is as much a matter of perception as it is of reality and public officials must strive to present an accurate portrait of public safety in our city. A month or so, Patch reported that in MoneyGeek's 2023 roundup of Safest Cities in America, Joliet ranked eighth-safest city, "with a crime cost per capita of \$247, a violent crime rate of 168 per 100,000 residents and a property crime rate of 372 per 100,000 residents."**

**In it's report to the City Council last month, Joliet Police Chief Bill Evans said crime "is up in some areas slightly, and it's down in some areas slightly," the Herald-News reported. Violent crimes were down 2% last year compared to 2021. The chief said robberies and motor vehicle thefts were also down by 24% and 13%, respectively. So, there is some positive news to report in this area.**

**But we also can't be blind to Joliet's problems. For instance, Chief Evans said Joliet has experienced an increase in financial crimes, such as criminals stealing checks in the mail. This regular information on crime trends helps residents more accurately distinguish the reality of crime versus their perceptions of crime. It also helps that the city added 40 additional officers last year.**

**If elected, I'll regularly connect my 4th District constituents to law enforcement officers who can provide a fuller picture of the real public safety threats facing residents. I'll also push for the City Council to do more to ensure that policing measures are being reinforced by community-based measures in our collective push to make Joliet even safer for all residents. That includes leveraging my office to create a consistent pipeline of communication, connection and caring support between our valued officers and our neighbors.**

5. Do you feel there is adequate affordable housing options in your district and the city?

**Joliet has a critical shortage of housing of all types, sizes, and price points. Statewide we have less than two months of housing inventory available, but Illinois trails all five other states in our Midwest region for new housing permits this year. According to the National Association of REALTORS®, it will take up to ten years of concentrated effort to address the shortage.**

**Joliet MUST start by taking a deep, hard look at its current zoning ordinances and how they either encourage or prohibit new housing construction. For too many cities, Joliet included, exclusionary zoning ordinances which prohibit certain areas of the city to a very limited type of development (i.e., single-family housing over mixed-use development), are often one of the biggest obstacles in addressing the housing shortage.**

6. Share with us your background and what unique qualities you believe you possess that stand out from the other candidates.

**20 years of banking experience as a bank executive. A decade in community banking including CRA Officer work. Appointed by the Mayor of Maywood (Where my office is located) to the economic development commission and later voted by my peers to serve as chair. Currently serves as Chairman and President for the Will County African American Business Association (AABA) and member of ComEd's Community Advisory Council. Formerly served the Greater Joliet YMCA as Board member, council chair, Annual Giving Gala Co-Chair, and Budget and Finance Committee Member. I also served as Board Chairman for a Autism Awareness Agency in Forest Park, IL. I am co-owner of a family commercial and residential cleaning business and married to Tecara Parker who is the Principal at Joliet West High School. I also have learned from many failures.**

7. Have you previously or are you currently serving on a governing board such as a business, nonprofit, other government, or a religious or education organization?  
**Stated above. I am also the CFO of my church in Joliet. Redeem Church Ministries.**

8. If so, how would this experience prepare you for this role and if not, do you believe this lack of experience would be a concern for voters?

**I have plenty of board experience inside and outside of Joliet which makes me uniquely qualified to lead District 4. I am a collaborator and collective impact enthusiast. I believe we can work together to achieve complex problems.**

9. What level of interaction do you plan to hold with constituents and do you feel that you have the ability to be continually accessible?

**I continue to work on ways I can be accessible to my family, church family, work family and people in general. I currently see a therapist who helps me to establish real balance in my life so I can be front and center where necessary. I realize that I won't be perfect. In the end, I want the impact to speak loudly for itself. That I will focus on not only the overall welfare of the district but I want to help build other leaders in the district to help solve complex problems and to take my place when my time has come to move on.**

10. Do you believe that the city is providing quality services such as water, garbage removal, sewer, snow removal, and infrastructure?

**Yes, but there is room for improvement and ways to explore how to maintain the quality and to improve costs past down to the residents. We have work to do.**

11. How would you work to improve communication with the citizens of Joliet?

**We must create a centralized communications and community relations initiative within the Districts that will keep neighbors up to date on city issues. We need to increase email and text blast notices and along with that we need to incorporate the input of residents into the city's budgeting process and other important matters by holding more public meetings ahead of the council's final vote.**

12. What strategic alliances can be explored and/or better utilized? Do you feel the city has a solid relationship with county, state, and federal elected officials? Please explain why or why not and how that can be improved.

**Very simple. We have great work to do! We need positive leadership willing to work across the aisle on many issues. In order to see sustainable and equitable development on the east side, we need collaborate like other**

**towns have done. I know we have collaborated on the water infrastructure but what else can that model work to solve for our town?**

13. Do you have any conflicts of interest that would prevent you from participating in council business?

**No. I do not believe.**

14. How do we maintain and enhance Joliet's position as a complete community with a thriving commercial and retail sector, highly ranked schools, diverse workforce, affordable housing, vibrant and walkable neighborhoods, and plenty of opportunities for recreation?

**Vote for Chris Parker on April 4 or vote for me during the many options for early voting. We need to vote experienced thinkers who do not put politics over people. This will take a lot of work to move the needle. The very first step is to work with elected leaders to establish a strategic plan for our city. We then need to place perimeters of accountable around us to check on progress and meet monthly on those measurements. When we get laser focused as a council on how to really transform our community IT WILL happen.**