
DISTRICT K SPECIAL ELECTION
CANDIDATES
BIOS &
ANSWERS
TO COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Tuesday 6:30-8:30^{PM}
APRIL 24TH
WESTBURY HIGH SCHOOL
11911 Chimney Rock - 77035

Questions & Candidates responses are printed as submitted.
This is an informational session in advance of the May 5th District K Special Election .

Larry Blackmon

Larry is a graduate of Jack Yates High School. He received a Bachelor degree from Lamar University and a Master degree in Public Administration and Urban/Regional Planning from Texas Southern University. Mr. Blackmon retired after over 33 years of coaching and teaching in HISD, FBISD, NFISD. He served as Administrative Assistant to Galveston, Texas, City Manager. He was a sponsor of Mayor's youth council (1994-2006). Mr. Blackmon currently sits on three City of Houston's board. He is Executive Director of (PACCO) Parent Against Community Crime Organization. He has been married to Linda for 43 years. They have 4 children and 4 grandchildren.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I am a 3rd generation Houston, married for 45 yrs, 4 children, 4 grandchildren, retired school teacher(33)yrs. Educational preparation includes: Master's degrees in Public Administration and Urban and Regional Planning with concentrations on Policy and Transportation. I currently serve as a Director on the Industrial, Higher Education, and Health Facilities boards with the City of Houston. I have produced awareness seminars on TIRZ, Child Sex Trafficking, Flooding, homeless Veterans and Infrastructure.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"? Renew and revisit talks with major grocery companies.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this?

A much needed Medical Corridor will save lives in response time, and provide medical services for our seniors and youth. Bring jobs in construction, infrastructure repair, personal services contracts associated in all areas of the medical field, and education. This project can be accomplished with the application and utilization of TIRZ #9,25,&41 and a public/private venture partnership with the City of Houston's Health Facilities board.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs?

White collar professionals should be encouraged to move in to these areas by the COH with incentives.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas?

Building relationships with colleagues and cross-support.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this?

Houston MUST adopt a Comprehensive Flood Plan that will eliminate standing water in our streets. This can be accomplished by the Army Corps of engineers; through the strategic placement of Lift stations(pumps) in particular areas in the city that will push the water to natural and man-made tributaries for flow and release.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? I have and Bachelor's degree in Health, Physical Education and Recreation. I worked for Houston Parks and Recreation for 12 yrs. I am a recreational golfer and a member of the Planner's association where one of the basic principals in planning is GREENSPACE.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation? I will actively promote hike and bike trails with the Parks and Recreation department.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K? We have to start with spending money wisely and go after low lying fruit. We can sustain quality infrastructure through the use of quality materials cutting down on continued and quickly repeating maintenance making Houston an affordable city to live in and promoting and increasing more public/private partnership ventures.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it?

I was a team leader in grad school in transportation at Texas Southern University. The original recommendation to the Mayor was for light rail to be aligned with Houston's evacuation high road routes traveling north, south, east, and west. Except for the Medical Center route, ridership is low, not counting special events ie Live Stock show and Rodeo. We can promote driverless vans and speed rail.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K?

By siliciting non-profit organizations to provide the ancillary support needed to enhance the foundations and expectations from elementary through middle schools to high schools.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? Deed retrictions are enforced through civil policing. Penalties for violations need more teeth and an upgrade in penalties.

Martha Castex-Tatum

Martha is a trailblazer, taking her first seat on City Council as the first African American woman to be elected in the history of San Marcos, TX. While on San Marcos City Council Martha served as Deputy Mayor Pro Tempore. Martha is a dual graduate of Texas State University earning her Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration degrees. Martha's dedication to service and business acumen has contributed to her effectiveness as the Director of Constituent Services for District K, since 2015. Martha resides in Brays Oaks, and is the mother of one son.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district? I have a long and deep history in District K. I grew up here, attending civic club meetings with my dad, and for the last three years have had the honor of serving as the District K Director of Constituent Services. I have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the district, which will enable me to hit the ground running on Day One as the Council Member.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"? Bringing new grocery store options to District K was a priority for Council Member Green, and will be my priority as well. A key component to getting more stores is increased economic revitalization in underserved neighborhoods. The grocery business, like most businesses, is about numbers. When new residents and businesses arrive, there will be the density and income levels needed to support a new store. The City can improve infrastructure and incentivize redevelopment to facilitate opening new stores.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this? We need to study traffic flow throughout District K to ensure mobility is efficient and safe. We can then identify traffic problem areas, ensure right turn lanes are adequate and that signal lightings are properly timed. Of course, we also need to build upon existing street expansion projects, add bike lanes, walking trails and sidewalks, as well as add traffic calming devices. All of these efforts support the goal of improving mobility and public safety throughout District K.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs? The City must continue to make improvements to public safety and infrastructure to make locations attractive for business. In some cases, the City can also use economic incentives to attract businesses, and I would advocate for that where applicable.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas? As a current City Council staff member, I am fortunate to have good existing relationships with the Mayor and Council Members. If elected, my strategy to advocate for District K would be based on open communication and mutual respect. I understand what the district needs, and know the process for getting things accomplished at City Hall.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this? In the aftermath of Harvey, it is clear that flood control -- mitigation and detention -- is a huge concern in southwest Houston. So many properties along Brays Bayou, and in other places, were damaged. We must address this issue urgently to keep southwest Houston thriving.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? I absolutely support enhancement of our existing green spaces as amenities for all Houstonians. As a Council Member, part of my role would be to serve as a conduit between District K residents and the Parks Department. I will communicate both what residents want and what the City can do, so we move forward in the most beneficial way possible.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation? The Willow Water Hole is a jewel in District K, and a wonderful example of how a public space can serve a dual purpose -- flood detention and a recreational green space. Through the Bayou Greenways plan, we should continue to utilize Brays, Sims and other bayous to connect Houstonians on bike and on foot, and to add usable green spaces to the city.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K? District K has many needs. I would place economic revitalization at the top of the list. Connected to that are public safety, infrastructure improvements and flood control. My current work as District K's Director of Constituent Services has given me a deep understanding of the challenges facing each neighborhood.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it? We need increased and improved transit options to move Houstonians where they need to go. METRO has made significant changes to its bus network in recent years, and further adjustments will likely be needed. Additionally, projects like the 90A commuter rail, to move people between Fort Bend County and Houston's core would have a major impact on District K.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K? I believe the City can and should be a partner with our public school districts. To the extent the City can assist in providing the "wrap-around" services -- health, nutrition, mental health, public safety, etc. -- needed to nurture the "whole child", we should. Ensuring the education of our youth is a collective responsibility, and one I would take very seriously as a Council Member.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? Currently, District K staff, including myself, hosts 101 workshops across the district to inform residents. Additionally, we attend civic club and other community meetings to share this information. The District K office is assigned an attorney from the City, as well as outside counsel to assist with resolving any deed restriction issues pertaining to setbacks, orientation of structure and other land use concerns.

Carl David Evans

Evans is an associate with White-Orugboh and Associates, PC, Certified Public Accountants. He has been honored to receive numerous awards for excellence, dedication and community service from the Department of the Navy, the State of Texas, the City of Houston, Southwest Houston 2000, and many other organizations. Carl David Evans graduated from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting and Business Administration. He also received a Master's Degree of Divinity from Houston Graduate School of Theology and is a licensed minister. Carl David Evans is blessed with three sons and five grandchildren.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I am qualified because I have been fighting on the outside for our community. For example, as President of the Fort Bend Super Neighborhood, I organized and led the effort to get a quality grocery store in District K. To address safety and the response times of emergency personnel in Fort Bend Houston, I coordinated with the council member's office to get the city to put the city's logo on major thoroughfare street sign locations in Fort Bend Houston so that residents would not be confused about who they should call during emergency situations.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"?

Food deserts are a direct result of discriminatory housing patterns created by public policies and private discrimination which continue in our city to this day. To address this problem, I would advocate for policies and programs that encourage quality supermarkets and other large-scale food retailers to directly address one of the root causes of the existence of food deserts—the failure of lenders and retailers to invest in communities like District K.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this?

I would start a new project to brand District K by working with the individual Management Districts, Tax Increment Investment Zones, and Super Neighborhoods to implement a branding campaign for District K. Right now we sort of have all of these entities working separately within their individual boundaries. A brand is a perception; it's what people think when you tell them where you are from. When someone says they live in District K, I want our brand to mean the best neighborhoods, the best schools, the best place to live, work, play.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs?

To spur economic growth and increase community jobs, I would use the variety of state and local incentive programs available to spur economic development and the creation of good jobs in District K. Programs such as the Texas Sales & Use Tax Exemptions, Texas Franchise Tax Exemptions & Reductions for Business Locations, COH Chapter 312 Property Tax Abatement, COH Freeport Tax Exemptions, and the one the city uses most effectively to spur economic development, COH Chapter 380 Agreements.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas?

Houston's strong mayor form of government is headed by the mayor who serves as the city's chief executive officer and the council is the city's legislative body. As a member of that legislative body, once I am elected to serve

as your next District K city council member, I will use the personal relationship skills I have and used as President of the Fort Bend Super Neighborhood to get things done, working with various leaders and stakeholders throughout the city and District K.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this?

I believe there are two issues; flooding and the quality of District K schools. We need to eliminate flooding and I will work with the mayor and council to come up with the root causes of flooding and find a way to stop our communities from flooding. The second issue is the quality of our schools. Today's students are tomorrow's entrepreneurs, innovators, workers and leaders. I will encourage, lobby, advocate, demand, I will do whatever it takes, to make sure District K has the best schools in the city of Houston.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places?

Yes. I vigorously support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces such as our jewel, Willow Waterhole and the Willow Waterhole Conservancy. The COH has a Parks & Open Spaces Ordinance which requires developers to set aside land for park purposes or pay a fee in lieu of the land dedication option. I will work with my colleagues on council to change the ordinance to allow local conservancies and friends of park type organizations to use some of these dedicated funds to preserve and enhance our existing parks and recreational areas.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation?

Houston continues to develop an active hike and bike trail system that runs through many District K neighborhoods. Some of the trails are longer than others and some are just too short to take advantage of and some of our trails are too dangerous at night for residents to use. I will work aggressively with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and HPD to make sure we have better connectivity and a safe trail system for our District K residents to use.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K?

A lot of work has already been done to identify the needs of District K. Southwest Houston 2000 has already identified and prioritized the needs for Southwest Houston, the Fort Bend Houston Neighborhood Council has recently finished identifying 18 priority items for the Fort Bend Houston area, and the South Houston Concerned Citizens Coalition, working with Super Neighborhoods 39 & 40, have identified priorities for their area. As council member, I would work with these organizations to identify and prioritize the needs for District K.

Carl David Evans (continued)

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it? My focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation would be to make sure we have an efficient and fair transportation system to serve the diverse demands of a community like District K. My initial focus would be on the need to fix the sidewalks throughout District K. If we have inadequate sidewalks and paths, you can have the best transportation options available and the citizens of District K would not be able to safely use or get to them.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K? I would proactively support HISD and FBISD public schools in District K by being a strong and forceful public advocate for schools in District K. I would personally visit all the schools in District K on a regular basis and volunteer my time to send a strong message that education matters and make sure my staff volunteered some of their time to read to the children in District K. I would encourage more community involvement by developing an adopt-a-school program in District K whereby different community organizations could adopt a school and help support teachers, parents, and students.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? The COH Legal Department is only authorized to enforce certain restrictions that affect the use to which property may be used; set back property lines, street lines, or lot lines, size of the lot, size, type, and number of structures built on a lot, orientation of the structure, and regulate fences that require a building permit. District K can assist by knowing what the legal department can and cannot do and reporting all violations to the legal department for their investigation and action.

Pat Frazier

Pat Frazier, a “Voice for the People”, has loved, lived, worked, married, raised her son and been a property owner for over 30 years in District K. She worked diligently with Council Member Larry Green on community projects and volunteered with Mayor Sylvester Turner’s campaign and his transition team. She has been a volunteer constituent liaison for Council Member Carol Mims Galloway, State Representative Borris Miles and State Representative Alma Allen. Current positions held: Executive Secretary for Senate District 13; Precinct 542 Chair; member of the Harris County Appraisal Review Board. She and husband John attend Lilly Grove Baptist Church.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I have loved, lived, worked, married, raised my son and been a property owner for over 36 years in District K. Many of my neighbors and community members saw the passion and volunteerism that I have. We have championed many causes together including cleanup efforts, renaming of the confederate school in our district, marching for a quality grocery store, planting trees and flowers and organizing voter registration and promoting voter education. I have served as a deputy voter registrar and volunteered in many candidates’ campaigns.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as “food deserts”? I would put together an economic team to create a comprehensive study using data to redefine community development and additionally, speak with elected officials of Heights and Montrose to see what attracted grocers to their communities.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this? One new project that will improve District K would be to bring back the Kroger supermarket chain to the Hiram Clarke, Ft. Bend/Houston and Westbury areas. I would set up a meeting with the owners of Kroger including Fred Myer, along with its subsidiaries Ralphs, KFC, and Smith’s to implement this project.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs? I would host a business summit in District K using comprehensive data to redefine community development and would provide sustainable community indicators that would support economic development. I will offer incentives to business owners and corporations looking to relocate to the city. With the help of management districts and TIRZ in the area, District K will be a competitive community.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas? My strategy would involve being persuasive and providing impactful, convincing arguments to support my ideas. I believe the mayor and my colleagues will support great ideas that will benefit District K.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this? I think that increasing the technology and infrastructure in the neighborhoods will be a priority. I will seek CIP funding and continue the support of the Army Corp of Engineers to bring forth projects that will alleviate flooding in our area.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? Yes. I support the continuation of the Keep Houston Beautiful project and to keep the Willow Watering Hole as a community jewel so that families will have a place to gather. To preserve and enhance our recreational places, I suggest planting trees, creating eco- friendly parks, neighborhood parks, walking trails, encouraging families to participate in such activities as planting a tree and issuing a plaque in memory of a family or community member’s name and soliciting groups, such as Boy Scouts, to do Eagle Scout projects to plant flowerbeds and food gardens.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation? Tangible support would involve providing city security for safety in our areas where people walk and bike, and provide bus service connections from Ft. Bend/Houston to the Westbury and Hiram Clarke areas.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called “Plan Houston” that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We’ve got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K? I have sat in many of the meetings and am familiar with the plan. The priorities are updating technology and infrastructure. Making neighborhoods safer and ridding them of crime would be my next priority. I would love to see rail run to Missouri City eventually.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it? Because Houston is such a sprawling city, our most prevalent available modes of transportation are cars and busses. We have an excellent METRO system that provides transportation from downtown Houston to outlying suburbs. I would include an expansion of the rail system.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K? I would encourage the Mayor to expand the role of his education czar. I have been on the forefront of keeping Madison and Lawson, low-performing schools, open. I am an active member of several committees at a number of area schools. I have been to HISD board meetings supporting major District K issues. I would diligently work with the district trustee Wanda Adams.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? Yes. I would ensure that all neighborhoods have deed restrictions. Once that is established, I will work with the Department of Neighborhoods and continue to invite them to our civic clubs and HOA meetings and share their policies and procedures with our neighbors. I believe that a lack of knoother various city departments for compliance.

Anthony Freddie

Freddie started public service as an employee of the City of Houston. He served as Assistant to Mayor Brown's Chief of Staff. He assisted in the development of the Super Neighborhood Council and was appointed Chair of the Alliance. In his tenure with the City he served in 5 major departments: the Mayor's Office, Building Service Department, Finance and Administration, Aviation Department and the Houston Police Department. Freddie's volunteer experience includes The World Youth Foundation, Inc., Texas A & M Extension Services and UNCF. Freddie currently serves as a board member of Northeast YMCA, HISD HIPPY Advisory Board and a member of NAACP Economic Development Committee.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I think my 30 years with the city of Houston and my commitment to community service will enable me better understand the various issues as it relate to the concerns of the constituents of District K.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"?

By using my abilities and experience as it relates to working with a variety of people different departments and businesses will enhance this ability to bring together; developers, city services and the community to solve this very complex problem.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this? work with the community to create a unique identity marker that every person driving into District K know they have entered into the district.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs? Economic development in a community is formed by identified a need for that particular community and bring together stakeholders to fill this need. Upon Filling this need all stake holders will benefit, which in-turn mean that the community can benefit. This can be realized by an influx of capital into that community which is either connected directly or indirectly to jobs, crime and the quality of life.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas? By bring policies and ideas to the table that not only benefit constituents of one particular district but bring forth solutions that will benefit the city as a whole. With this in mind I will work with the mayor and other council members in achieving their goals thus benefiting each.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this? Flooding and public safety seems to be in the forefront of most resident in this area. By working with other agencies on all levels; i.e., Federal - FEMA, State-(Land commissioner), County-Home buy out program- Corp of engineers and city stake holders.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? Yes, I think by working with Harris County flood controll and the Corp of engineers will present a great opportunity for businesses and the community as a whole to identify locations for green spaces.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation? By enhancing the existing bayou trails and again working with the county as they work on alleviating flood and improving infrastructure in these areas would be a excellent time to incorporate these plans.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K? Work with the community on the 12 identified Core Strategies to better District K

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it? Multi-model transportation should include streets and infrastructure with a multi-purpose use. cars, buses, bikes and all built around the long term effect of rail in the future. By making streets and infrastructure a priority will be one of my priorities as it relates to mobility in district K.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K? Public schools is indirectly tied to the community, which reflects the strength and values of the community which it serve. I would bring together all stake holders and along with the community and address this most important issue.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? Although Houston is not zoned I feel along with enforcing existing ordinances and deed restrictions that are already in force. As a former employee of the COH and have worked directly worked with complaints, violations and other issues as it relate to keeping our neighborhoods clean and safe. I will use my experience and knowledge as a platform to help improve our neighborhoods.

Elisabeth Johnson

Johnson is a Houstonian graduated from Southern University and A&M College (LA) with a Bachelors in Political Science. She interned in Louisiana for Walter Boasso when he ran for Governor in 2007, and volunteered with Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden (LA), Chris Bell and others. After graduating, she worked for former Mayor Bill White's campaign for Governor in Dallas. After the election she stayed in Dallas and worked with Texas Organizing Project and Working America. After moving back to Houston, Elisabeth's first mission was to help TOP and Working America pass the Wage Theft Ordinance. Currently she is running for City Council and obtaining her Masters in Public Administration from TSU in May.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I've always worked for others in the district by advocating on their behalf at protests and rallies, speaking against school closures within HISD, and educating neighbors and other constituents on what's going on throughout the city and state. I've been behind the scenes as a community organizer and activist and will do the same in City Council.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"?

I want to continue Councilman Green's "Klean It Up, Green It Up" initiative and provide more farmers markets and gardens throughout the entire district. I believe in growing your own produce and knowing where it comes from but we also need quality grocery stores in all of District K. I'll work to have that implemented for our entire area.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this?

For almost 13 year, the land where Astroworld used to be has been vacant. I would love to see another amusement park there or a family friendly attraction in lesser to bring more visitors to our great city. As the 4th largest city in the nation I feel we should have more attractions here for families to come and spend time. I'd also like to transform the Astrodome into an indoor water park or indoor amusement park, it shouldn't just be sitting there as a shell of a building.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs?

Reaching out to franchise owners, business owners, entrepreneurs, etc would be on my agenda to bring more economic opportunities to District K. We have so much undeveloped land to occupy and this would be a start to fixing these vacancies.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas?

By making sure to keep open lines of communication with everyone and having them understand that I'm open to work together for the greater good of our city. Working with other council members and the mayor on their projects and ideas is my goal and always bringing up the needs and concerns of my constituents.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this?

Public safety has been brought up a few times and I want to make sure that we continue to have a safe District. There's not much violence here but we have to keep it that way so working police officers to make sure they have quality training and enforcing community policing throughout the entire district is my goal.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? Parks have always been a place where I can relax and have peace so I'm in favor of always protecting them, preserving and enhancing them. I would love to sit down with members from our Houston Parks and Recreation Department to Head their ideas and needs for our parks.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation?

I want to work with our communities and Super Neighborhoods to ensure that we collectively work together with keeping our spaces safe. I would love to have a district wide program that promotes living a healthier life as well.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K?

Flooding is definitely a huge problem in District K that needs to be fixed. I believe that for now those areas within the district that have been strongly effected don't need anymore additions and we don't need to build in that area until we fix our flooding issue. Making sure that our storm drains get worked on and addressing finding a solution regarding the amount of water our bayous can hold as well.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it?

I am in favor of having multi-modal transportation. As large as our city is I believe it's more of a necessity. Currently in some parts of District K the rail system doesn't travel our way, if you're not driving the only other option is to ride the bus or use Uber or Lyft. I want to work on improving that, I'm sure if we had more means to travel to work in the mornings 90 and 610 wouldn't be so packed on the way to work.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K?

Being an educator and coming from a family of educators means that I am always in support of education and finding better solutions to improve our schools. I'm a product of HISD so I constantly support the district and believe in quality education. Before in the past I've spoken up on parents and other teachers behalf's to make sure their voices and concerns were heard on a district level and I'll do the same in City Council.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods?

Working with the different HOAs in the district and having each homeowner know that violations will not be tolerated is key. Putting a system in place for multiple violators would likely help to make sure deed restrictions are followed correctly.

Lawrence McGaffie

Lawrence McGaffie is a native Houstonian. He founded Inspire the Lead, a movement to inspire, empower and engage the next generation of leaders at City Hall. He earned a BFA in Film Production from The Art Institute of Houston. Lawrence is an Army veteran and an ordained minister. He served as associate minister, youth leader and outreach minister to a number of churches across Houston. He also served as Director of Community Engagement for the MLK Association of Houston. Lawrence volunteers at many outreach programs including God's Food Pantry where he helped the homeless find hope and basic necessities. His roaring motto is: Together we can build better, stronger communities.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I am a decorated military veteran. I held a Top Secret Clearance and specialized in sensitive intelligence sources and analytical processes allowing me to provide an assessment of data from multiple sources, recognize patterns and respond effectively to issues in District K. My education equipped me with critical thinking and research skills and knowledge in the study of liberal arts, sciences, psychology, sociology and education. I am a public speaking to youth across Houston and my volunteer work with homeless shelters, UofH and Rebuild Houston has instilled in me a deep love for our people and this great city.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"?

I will promote development of smaller grocery stores in and around food deserts that focus primarily on providing quality food to the community by gathering representatives from local and national grocery store chains and briefing them on how their development in food insecure areas within our district will support healthier communities. We can also incentivize grocery stores and businesses by offering rebates or tax credits, promote farmers markets and food gardens in undeveloped areas.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this?

I will improve our transportation and infrastructure by expanding light rails and pedestrian friendly paths in the district. This will be accomplished by funding multi purpose grade separation and road construction projects that strategically improve transportation in our District.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs?

I will promote the repurpose of strip malls into mixed-use development facilities and build public-partnership with business leaders and government officials to renovate strip centers making them more pedestrian friendly. Uses that increase community jobs include: Bicycle storage and repair centers, loading stations for future light rails, data centers, charter schools, micro-lofts and affordable housing, restaurants and hotels, office and retail space for corporations and small businesses, churches, radio stations, karate or yoga schools, beauty and barber shops, a medical center, gyms, pharmacies, bookstores and physical therapy centers.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas?

Cultivating a "Houston First" culture at City Hall that is centered on the idea of "Unity First" where everyone is committed to the progress of each district. We will be successful as long as we innovate and create from the strength of our unity. I will ensure that any ideas are practical and can be used as a test model and ultimately beneficial across other districts. I will also seek their advice, guidance, input, ideas and suggestions in the process which makes them apart of the solution. Accountability and a commitment to continuous improvement will help us advance our district and the City as a whole.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this? A workable solution to flooding. Green stormwater infrastructure plan can help mitigate flooding, and limit property damage and water pollution. I will work with residents and businesses to make use of rain gardens (planted areas that absorb rainwater where it falls), bioswales (shallow, vegetation-lined drainage channels), permeable pavement (a road or surface made out of material that allows water to seep through), green roofs and walls (vegetated roofs or walls that capture rainfall on the building itself and rain barrels (storage containers that collect rainwater from roofs).

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places? I will promote awareness through local activities and media attention, utilize more recreational places for local and official functions such as the Willow Water Hole, allocate funding for improvement projects in and around green spaces and recreational places, and promote policy that protect these areas up to a reasonable radius.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation? I will fund grade separation projects that are pedestrian friendly and that promote the use of bike paths and future light rails as well as fund the development and implementation of surveillance and security hubs that keep our connected places safe.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhood, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K? I will conduct polls and surveys every year that identify the top three priorities that the District should focus on in following year. Last year's top priorities as a City were crime, flooding and transportation issues involving failing road infrastructure. I will also update the district on last year's progress and any additional projects that support our top priorities along with completion times and budget. All other priorities will tie in to the top three priorities identified by constituents and must closely align with the City's core strategies.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it?

Transportation issues are one of the top priorities for residents. I will focus on increasing pedestrian friendly bike paths and laying a foundation for an expanded light rail in the district. I will focus construction on projects that incorporate this priority in our infrastructure plan my first year in office.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K?

I will host regular meetings with the superintendent and principals from schools in our District as well as promote community and parental involvement. This effort includes partnering with business leaders and government officials to provide educational resources and classes to parents including vouchers for school uniforms and transportation. I will also regularly visit schools and educate students on how they can improve our community through their involvement and encourage city departments to conduct presentations year around for our District schools.

Lawrence McGaffie (continued)

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods? Complaints require proving the violation and reporting it to the legal department who investigates and notifies the violator. District K can assist by my office and each super neighborhood analyzing deed restrictions complaints for their area. We can then map a list or grid of complaints and expedite solutions by showing patters, highlighting potential damage to the community and ensuring proper response and investigations. I will contact and visit with deed violators and conduct awareness campaigns in areas with the most/urgent violations by distributing info about what constitutes a violation and information on how to correct them.

Aisha Savoy

Candidate chose not to participate.

Gerry Vander-Lyn

Gerry Vander-Lyn was born in Hermann Hospital and grew up in southwest Houston, attending Mark Twain Elementary, Pershing Junior High, and Bellaire High School. She graduated from the University of Houston with a Bachelor of Arts in History. She has worked in various capacities in multiple sectors including social services, finance, and non-profits. She has never run for public office before now, choosing instead to support others in that endeavor. However, the time has come to step on the stage and apply her skills and experience to solving the issues facing the City of Houston today.

Why do you think you are qualified to represent this district?

I am an intelligent, well-educated, articulate woman with 40 years of life and work experience in multiple disciplines including social services, investment industry, and the non-profit sector.

What would you do to address areas of District K that would be classified as "food deserts"?

This has to start with definitions. What is a food desert? You find a desert in every grocery store. The entire middle of the store is a desert. Second, getting people to choose live food is not easy. The lower the economic level the lower the understanding and knowledge of nutrition unless we are in the rural areas of the country. In those areas many of the poor eat very well because they plant gardens. This will require education and collaboration and creativity. I'd love to work with Lettuce.fm and create sustainable local balcony gardens and backyard gardens.

Name one new project you think will improve District K and how you will go about accomplishing this?

See number two above.

District K has many strip malls that have vacancies. What would you do to encourage economic development, as well as increase community jobs?

Economic development happens when neighbors help neighbors. I would encourage people with ideas for a small business to come forward and share what is holding them back. Usually it is a combination of emotion (fear!) and lack of knowledge. Lack of capital is usually not the major restrictor. Many communities world-wide are improving with very small micro-loans that can be paid back quickly. We could combine a micro-grant system with an educational program and a buddy/mentor system.

What strategy will you use to get the mayor and other council members to support your ideas?

Need more than 100 words. In a nutshell we have to change the city charter. Only the mayor can put something on the agenda and the mayor has to sign off on capital improvement projects. If we change both of those we come closer to a level playing field with a true deliberative process. Many of my ideas will not require the mayor's approval. Those that do are at risk for not happening because I will not vote contrary to my conscience regardless of whether the mayor approves our projects or not.

What do you see as the most important issue to help improve the overall quality of life of southwest Houston residents, and what will you do to support this?

I can't pick just one, but I can pick two; police and improved drainage. I will work at getting a charter change on the ballot. I will also be a broken record, bringing the discussions back to those two needs over and over and over again.

Do you support preservation, conservation, and enhancement of our existing green spaces to provide great outdoor locations for residents in southwest Houston? If so, how will you actively support the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, as well as local conservancies and Friends of park organizations to preserve and enhance our recreational places?

Absolutely I support green spaces. See answers to the questions above for some of the ideas. One thing is to actually talk to the boots on the ground in Parks and Recreation and see what their challenges are and what creative solutions they have that are sitting on the shelf due to no one listening or to insufficient funding or insufficient collaboration with private business and non-profits.

What active tangible support will you provide specifically for District K to achieve safer, more connected places for people to walk and bike for health, transportation, and recreation?

See answer to 9 below. I'd start there. Then partnering with private business and non-profits would be another tactic to pursue.

Houston has a general plan which was adopted by city council in 2015 called "Plan Houston" that identifies 12 core strategies for our City to pursue, supporting a positive vision for our future. We've got a lot on our plate to support including: transportation, housing, neighborhoods, infrastructure, etc. How would you identify and prioritize the needs for District K?

There are a little over 50 precincts in District K and each precinct has an average of 3,000 registered voters. I want to have a meeting in every precinct, either in a school, public facility, or someone's home. The goal is to identify 30 people in every precinct willing to pitch in and do something. With that many people "on stand-by" as it were, no one would get burned out. We are our richest, most powerful resource. I think it would take about 12 months to get each precinct "cell" up and running.

What is your focus on the topic of multi-modal transportation and what do you see as your priority for improving it?

This is complicated because we have TX-DOT, Metro, private contractors, the public, and probably a couple more players I am leaving out. Again, 100 words is not enough. We need definitions. What is meant by multi-modal, which mode is underperforming, and what would improvement look like.

How would you proactively support HISD and public schools in District K?

The Bar Association has a cool program for teaching 7th graders the history of the courts in the state of Texas. Finding more programs and partnering with more organizations is one way I would support HISD.

To revitalize some of our neighborhoods and to attract responsible homeowners, complaints about violations of deed restrictions are sometimes filed with the COH Legal Department. Are you aware of how this procedure works? Please explain how you feel that District K can assist with enforcement of deed restrictions to improve our neighborhoods?

This is part of a more generic problem – enforcement. As a society we are not enforcing anything anywhere. I am not familiar with the city process for addressing deed restriction violations. I do know that many neighborhoods with deed restrictions enforce via law suits. I would need to research to see if they use the city legal department or simply take the offender to court. Wledge and information contribute to the problem of deed restrictions violations. The District K office can forward complaints from citizens, civic clubs and HOAs to the Legal Department for enforcement of city ordinances and

