

NETWORK 49 MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Name: Brandon Johnson

1) Professional Background

1. What progressive policy issue/achievement are you most proud of?

In the wake of civil uprisings in the summer of 2020, I passed the Justice for Black Lives resolution, which called for more than \$150 million in investments in physical and mental health, staffing in the Cook County Health system, jobs, housing, restorative justice and violence prevention, broadband Internet access, and additional resources to reverse the troubling trend of over-incarceration of Black and Brown men, women and children

2. What have you worked on/toward that you regret NOT having accomplished?

My only regret is that for every piece of legislation, and every dollar amount provide for the people, I always wish that we could have done more.

2) Climate Change / Sustainability

1. How will you fight and address the impacts of climate change? How do you plan to move Chicago towards a greener city?

We need Chicago to lead the way in protecting the communities most affected by pollution, and take a strong stand to mitigate climate disaster.

We also need to make Chicago a leader in sustainability: We need to find new and better ways to support economic growth that is environmentally sustainable, and make our city a center of the growth industries of the future that involve sustainable, green and circular economy principles, where the jobs increasingly will be. We also need to address the legacy of environmental racism that has made some of our neighborhoods “sacrifice zones,” where polluters are allowed to foul the air and water in ways that undermine the health of the entire community.

As mayor, I will conduct a cumulative impact assessment to advance comprehensive environmental regulations; work to outfit Chicago Public Schools buildings with green HVAC systems, new ventilation solar panels and other renewable energy sources; and reopen and fully fund the city’s Department of Environment.

It’s great that City Hall has a green roof; but that commitment to environmental sustainability needs to filter down through the entire building. A better environment will mean a more livable city for all – which will mean a better economy.

2. What policies and practices will you initiate to promote environmental justice and reverse environmental racism which has steered hazardous industrial sites to be located in low-income communities?

I was proud to come out in support of the hunger strikers and organizers of the #StopGeneralIron campaign, and I am proud to have earned the support of #StopGeneralIron organizer Olga Bautista and hunger striker Oscar Sanchez. I also

defended the #StopGeneralIron teachers from workplace retaliation, and supported their Green New Schools campaign.

Going further, I believe in fully funding and restructuring a Department of Environment that will lead, coordinate, and plan processes with other city departments and agencies to reduce carbon emissions, create strong economic opportunities for residents and restructuring permitting processes and building codes to move us forward. I would also encourage Gov. Pritzker to sign the multistate MOU for medium duty and heavy duty vehicles so that we can continue pushing for the electrification of the shipping and logistics industry, and approve no permits that would result in disasters like the Hilco explosion in Little Village in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Do you support the creation of a Chicago Department of the Environment?

Yes.

4. How will you address preservation and protection of our lakefront to include fighting lakefront erosion and supporting ecosystem projects?

Support all policies limiting the privatization of public park spaces, and improve community engagement between public and private groups seeking to operate for profit in public parks. I will also engage grassroots safe transportation organizations, environmentalists and other stakeholders to discuss how to make DuSable Lake Shore Drive and the area around it a safer and more usable region for all. It's essential that we better manage car traffic and increase pedestrian, bike, and wheelchair access along the lakefront.

3) Health

1. What will you do to improve mental health services and how?

Reopen and fully fund Chicago's mental health clinics.

2. What is your position on (a) Treatment Not Trauma, (b) opening closed mental health clinics, and (c) developing non-police responses to mental health emergencies?

I support all.

3. What will you do to ensure equitable access to acute care hospitals in the city?

I was 19 when my mother, Wilma Jean Johnson, died from a rare heart condition. My father was unemployed, and without health insurance, her condition went untreated.

Health care is a human right, and affordable health care and is my number one priority. Next is ensuring that the communities that need the most resources have the most resources by keeping hospitals and facilities fully funded and staffed.

4. What will you do to ensure seniors and the disabled are able to remain in their homes and have access to health care?

Seniors in Chicago really rely on their housing costs staying manageable. This keeps individuals in their communities and support networks. The cost pressures many Chicagoans face can be much harder to handle on a fixed income.

Affordable housing is key to supporting seniors as they age in the community. Chicago has the ability in its community development policies to prioritize the types of affordable housing policies that help keep seniors in their homes, which could include everything from prioritizing within types of affordable housing investments the city makes to what we require from developers.

5. How are you going to address structural racism in health care access?

By building off initiatives like Medicare for All legislation, which I passed on the Cook County Board, which provided health care coverage for 40,000 additional Cook County residents through County Care. We need to center the needs of those we know have struggled with access for generations, whom we've seen suffer during the pandemic, and who we know are affected in disproportionate numbers by conditions like breast cancer and diabetes. Reverse the trends and our prioritize Black and Brown populations, and in addition to treatment, provide education on good mental, physical and spiritual health.

4) Diversity/Inclusion

1. Given Chicago's racial and ethnic diversity, what is your position on how to unify our city in relation to race, ethnicity, cultural, and sex/gender orientation?

We need to protect families threatened by gentrification and rising property taxes, fully fund and resource all Chicago public schools equitably, increase affordable housing and public housing, and provide pathways to home ownership. We must demand recognition of gender and reproductive rights, and promote city and neighborhood-based cultural hubs across all communities. Unification comes through education, but also in truly being a welcoming city for all. And this starts from within.

2. How will you address the reparations movement with regard to American descendants of chattel slavery, stolen indigenous lands, etc.?

I will be a partner, and a collaborator, in movements for reparations, and support efforts to make descendants of slavery and genocide whole.

3. What solutions will you propose for Chicago government to address systemic racism in city structures, especially in CPD, CPS, city government offices, etc.?

We must root out racism in all city agencies, and allow a no-tolerance policy for any incidents of racism found within.

4. What have you done to address policies and practices specifically regarding harm to or support for American Descendants of Slavery and Indigenous peoples?

I have been a leader on the Cook County board in ongoing work for the recognition and celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day.

5) Safety / Police / Accountability / Equity

1. What is your plan to support city compliance with the federal consent decree and ensure accountability in police use of force, training, discipline, etc.?

While the consent decree contains many important provisions, in several crucial respects, it falls short and instead allows the CPD to create paperwork and policy revisions and claim compliance. That is not the stuff of culture change or strong leadership.

Until the CPD superintendent uses their significant power to remove racist violent officers from the streets pending full investigations, CPD officers will continue to abuse with impunity, because the department's broken disciplinary system sends the strong message that they can.

My administration will request permission from the federal court to modify the consent decree's terms to include the creation of proven, effective diversion programs such as a pre-arrest diversion program that will allow officers to divert people from the formal justice system; community mediation program that will allow community members to address disputes without relying on police; and the development of a citation program that will allow officers to give tickets — but not arrest people for quality of life and other minor offenses.

2. What will you do to improve public safety and increase our sense of security?

I will chart a new strategy for public safety, rather than relying on the same failed approaches that have brought trauma to communities across the city. I will work with police and first responders to invest in community-based interventions that de-escalate conflict, reduce violence and make our neighborhoods safer. I will create an Office of Community Safety, reopen the city's mental health clinics, fully fund year-round youth employment, and foster partnerships between communities and law enforcement to make critical investments preventing crime before it happens.

3. How will you improve the relationship between police and communities?

Trust. Urging the Chicago City Council passage of the GoodKidsMadCity Peacebook and Anjanette Young ordinance will go a long way toward improving trust among the city, its people and the Chicago Police Department. Residents want to know they are being heard by city government, that they will be protected, and that their concerns will be addressed. This ensures trust.

4. What alternatives to current policing practices will you pursue to improve public safety?

I will remove the flawed gang database and support Treatment Not Trauma, reduce inefficiencies in public safety spending, and direct more funds to violence prevention and community safety programming that address the root causes of community violence.

6) Urban Planning / Housing / Homelessness / Infrastructure

1. Will you support the Bring Chicago Home Ordinance? Why or why not?

Yes. Because every resident of Chicago deserves access to stable, long-term, affordable, healthy and dignified housing.

2. What will you do to promote affordable housing preservation and development?

I would encourage the Chicago Housing Authority to cease any land grabs or private partnerships, and instead, develop local community processes for land use to deliver on the promises to rebuild public housing in our city. This is how the City and its people and communities can address the housing and humanitarian crisis together.

My administration would also use community outreach to launch a citywide assessment of public buildings and empty schools to discuss repurpose possibilities. There are many facilities across the city that can serve as SROs and affordable housing units at cost to address the crisis of the 65,000+ unhoused in Chicago.

3. How would you work with communities and local community organizations regarding neighborhood development and investing in Chicago's disinvested communities?

The City of Chicago needs to develop comprehensive plans to support local affordable housing projects such as 18th and Peoria in Pilsen – the largest affordable housing plan in the city. We must ensure that the local average median income and local residents are considered, and encourage residents to apply for quality affordable housing units. With tax increment financing (TIF) reform, those funds can be an important source of revenue. We can also support and invest in innovative models like housing co-ops that create permanent affordable housing units, and encourage the creation of a public bank to ensure fair lending opportunities for Chicagoans.

Finally, we can protect naturally occurring affordable housing by capping property tax hikes and working with state officials to 1) create tax breaks for those who keep rents affordable, and 2) change State statute to assess taxes based on rental income.

4. How do you plan to improve residential streets, sidewalks, lighting, parks, and green alleys, and bicycle lanes and paths?

We need bike lanes installed equitably across the city, but we also need overall traffic calming features like curb extensions, bump outs, and raised crosswalks and intersections to make pedestrians safer as well. Because none of these accommodations exist in a vacuum, but instead, are part of how our city needs to reimagine street safety.

Chicago also needs reduced speed limits and automobile access in select areas of the city, and a rapid-response CDOT team and municipal sidewalk snow and ice removal program. We should also create car-free zones in communities to promote safe walkability and recreation for children.

We also need well-lit streets and parkways, so that cyclists and pedestrians feel safe on our streets.

7) Immigration

1. How will you maintain and promote Chicago's status as a sanctuary city? What would you do differently, especially in response to immigrants being sent to Chicago?

Chicago must lead with and live by the promise to be a sanctuary city and welcome immigrants and refugees, and treat them with dignity and respect. This sanctuary promise must extend to everyone who needs it in our city, and residents both old and new. Our public schools must be sanctuaries for all children by investing in dual language programs, ethnic studies and English as a Second Language (ESL). We must coordinate efforts with local communities with the infrastructure to support displaced immigrants and refugees, and coordinate efforts at all level of government to provide humane conditions for everyone.

2. Will you increase funding to the Department of Family and Support Services to help address the current migrant crisis?

Yes.

8) Education

1. Given the history of under-investment in neighborhood schools, particularly in communities of color, what specific measures will you take to ensure high quality education in all Chicago public schools?

School communities need direct investment, guarantees of staffing and program offerings. Every school should have a library and librarian, adequate clinicians and counselors, thriving arts offerings and sports programs and teams. And the mayor of Chicago has an obligation to be actively fighting in partnership for the revenue required to fulfill those basic needs for every school in the city, not just some.

2. What is your position on charter schools?

Charter schools must be held to the same standards of accountability as traditional, neighborhood public schools.

3. By 2027 Chicago will have a fully elected school board. What measures do you advocate that will lead to equitable school board membership? Do you support limits on campaign financing in school board elections? Should elected school board members be paid for their service?

I support a map that ensures all communities in this tremendously diverse city have the opportunity to have their voices heard. This is why I worked so closely with Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and community organizations on the legislation to create this vibrant model of democracy for the first time ever in the history of Chicago Public Schools.

We need campaign finance rules to prevent those with no stake in our public schools, or our communities, from controlling our democracy. We cannot have uber rich, arch-conservatives usurping the power that working people in Chicago fought so hard to win. We need candidates who are deeply invested and knowledgeable from the communities served to have a fair chance to win races to influence the education of their children.

Democratic governance requires partnership. The city doesn't absolve itself of any responsibility to schools just because there are democratically elected school community leaders sitting at the Board of Education. As mayor, I will continue to fight for resources in our schools, and maintain and build upon the coordinated support and services that the city has to offer children and families.

4. Do you support a continued moratorium on school closings?

Yes.

9) Art & Culture

1. How will you support culture, equity, and the arts in Chicago – both for organizations as well as for individual artists and collectives (visual arts/theatre/dance/music)?

We need to make culture, equity and the arts anchors of not only our city, but of all 77 communities. And that starts with education, funding and cross-collaboration between neighborhoods and cultures. Chicago remains a segregated city, but the art of expression and creativity has always been the tie that binds, and that would be a hallmark of my administration.

I know there is another Curtis Mayfield out here, another Wood Harris or another Chance the Rapper. Just think about all of the talent that comes from Chicago. Earth Wind & Fire played in a band at what used to be Crane Jr. College, which is now Malcom X College. Chaka Khan sang in the choir at Kenwood. DuSable High School burst at the seams with musical talent for decades. So I would support artist mentoring, and community programming and partnerships for outreach in Chicago Public Schools to make sure that theatre, dance and music is in every school, with the full funding to support it. Our love and admiration for the arts has to begin with our youth, so that we start developing the stars of the future, today.

2. Will you support a funding increase for arts education, sports, and extracurricular programs in our schools and parks?

Yes! I fully support increasing arts funding, funding for sports and the Chicago Park District, and also raising the standards for arts grants so that workers can benefit. I'm a progressive. I will always believe in "more" for programs and resources, as well as workers and working families when it comes in the context of fiscal responsibility.