

## **NETWORK 49 MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Candidate Name:** Sophia King

### **1) Professional Background**

1. What progressive policy issue/achievement are you most proud of?
  - a. As the Alderwoman of the 4th Ward and Chair of the City Council's Progressive Caucus, I led the fight for a \$15 minimum wage in Chicago and carried the measure through the City Council. I know that every Chicagoan deserves a living wage. After that ordinance was passed 400,000 Chicagoans got a raise and 100,000 Chicagoans were lifted out of poverty, and I am immensely proud of that.
2. What have you worked on/toward that you regret NOT having accomplished?
  - a. I also fought to eliminate the tipped subminimum wage within the city during that same fight because it hurts our families and is a legacy of entrenched racism, but we were not able to do so. I wish we had, and I will keep fighting for that.

### **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?
  - a. Sophia understands that we must expand our environmental policy out of its silos and into every part of our city. Chicago residents deserve clean water, clean food and clean air as basic human rights. The only way to truly combat climate change is for it to reach into all facets of our government. To that I will create a Department of the Environment to ensure that there is a cabinet level position advocating for, overseeing, and implementing greener policies.
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?
  - a. In order to address the impacts of environmental racism, like the inequity of concentrated air pollution for Black and Brown neighborhoods along highways and trucking routes we can take the following steps to reduce the burden in these communities. First, we must center community priorities and identify the potential for equitable technology to reduce impact. We can hold community town halls, complete studies and training for truck drivers, identify public health strategies to reduce the impact and explore creative financing options to fund changes. Secondly, for implementation, we can draft a Zero Emission Truck Policy Action Plan that details regulatory responsibilities and reflects a just transition framework, accountability measures and sustainable support. Thirdly, we can assess the feasibility and inform the development of a Zero Emission Truck Pilot including in-depth driver consultation, community engagement, suppliers, costs and lessons learned around the country.
3. Do you support the creation of a Chicago Department of the Environment?
  - a. Yes, I wholeheartedly support the creation of a Chicago Department of the Environment.
4. How will you address preservation and protection of our lakefront to include fighting lakefront erosion and supporting ecosystem projects?

### **3) Health**

1. What will you do to improve mental health services and how?
  - We need to understand that mental health centers, are both essential care that we should provide to our residents, and a great way to tackle the fundamental problem affecting Chicago today: public safety. Calls for non-violent interventions – frequently caused by mental health incidents – make up over 50% of all calls to 911. I might not eventually choose to reopen every single mental health facility based on individual cost-benefit analysis. However, I would make investments in the current ones and to reopen them in communities that lack mental health care and improve existing facilities which is a priority in my overall public safety budget. We can pay for this under our existing budget by reprioritizing resources. And the clinics can also expand their focus to include more healthcare options and/or be Diversion Centers for people experiencing mental health or homeless insecurities. We can also use them for our critical response teams responding to non-violent crisis cause by homeless, and mental health insecurities.
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 believe support of all the above. Please see my first answer in this section.
3. What will you do to ensure equitable access to acute care hospitals in the city?
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 deserve to live with dignity and remain in the homes and neighborhoods they love. As Mayor, Sophia will bring back the respect that our elders deserve. As Mayor, Sophia will collaborate with HUD to increase landlords' accountability to senior housing units and tenants, develop additional property tax incentives to ensure Seniors are able to maintain their homes, and coordinate with the council to develop a Seniors' Bill of Rights focused on protecting our most vulnerable from scammers, bad landlords and predatory practices
5. How are you going to address structural racism in health care access?
  - Chicago, in spite of all its diversity, continues to perpetuate racial divisions across neighborhood divides and political divides. As Mayor, one of my goals will be to continue to build a true coalition of trust among the community leaders across all groups. Understanding the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality among Black and Brown communities and the steps we must take to break down barriers to progress will always be at the forefront of my administration. Ultimately systemic racism, sexism and genderism fueled by ignorance and a lack of cultural competency keeps us from reaching our true potential. We need to continue to educate as well as fund equitably the values that we espouse or that we seek. We do not do a good job of that. As Mayor, I would lead with compassion and demand true equity in approaching these hurdles.

#### **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?
  - a. Chicago has the talent, diversity, affordability and infrastructure to be the leading tech hub in the nation. We can create the Silicon Valley of the Midwest by launching a new tech ecosystem with vocational/technical education to develop a world-class workforce that is ready for the opportunities of the future. We know that overall, connectivity within the city that links neighborhood to neighborhood, and each neighborhood to downtown, enables equity and economic vitality. Affordable and accessible public transportation connects to our jobs, our schools, entertainment, pharmacies, grocery stores, with our families. We have had a disparity of connectivity where much of the West South Side has been left out of this basic core community element. The pandemic impact on public transportation has been dire but as we address affordability and create more housing we can create new business corridors and density to increase accessibility and public transportation. By creating a Chicago which works for everyone, we can create a Chicago where all feel welcomed, supported, and at home.
2. How will you address the reparations movement with regard to American descendants of chattel slavery, stolen indigenous lands, etc.?
3. What solutions will you propose for Chicago government to address systemic racism in city structures, especially in CPD, CPS, city government offices, etc.?
  - a. I believe that these inequities were intentionally constructed, and that we need to be intentional about how we repair them. One striking example is the distribution of speed cameras. The existing cameras are inequitably and disproportionately distributed prying on mostly poor black and brown people. With collaboration we could redistribute the cameras more equitably including placing them in areas that provide more safety and more revenue. We can then have safety, more equity, and actually increase revenue.
4. What have you done to address policies and practices specifically regarding harm to or support for American Descendants of Slavery and Indigenous peoples?
  - a. I will continue to show up and fight for my Black neighbors every day as Mayor just like I have as Alderman. I have been a consistent leader above and beyond the Mayor pushing her into nearly all of the most positive things she has done for our community. I led the fight to rename Congress Ave. to Honor Ida B. Well. She fought me on that. I led the fight to rename Lake Shore Drive to DuSable Lake Shore Drive. She fought me on that. I won. I also added an honorary street name for Lerome Bennet Jr. I am leading the continuing development of the former Michael Reese Campus into the new Bronzeville Lakefront, which has a \$25M commitment to education, 20% affordable housing on site, and 60% minority participation in contracting. a project that has been recognized nationally by outlets like the New York Times as a leader for minority inclusion in contracting, affordable housing, and service to the community. Throughout my ward, we have cleared 40% minority contractor participation for new development, mostly African American given the demographics of my Black majority community, far exceeding the goals or actual attainment of the city. I led the fight for \$15 minimum wage which gave 400,000 Chicagoans a raise, and lifted 100,000 out of poverty – many of them Black. Even before I was an alderman, I founded and ran a non-profit dedicated to driving employment and

investment in Black communities in Chicago. Even before that, I helped to found Ariel Academy to make sure that my neighbors, my community, got the same quality education that the students at the Latin School did.

### **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.?
  - a. Under this administration we have seen the department of Constitutional Policing underfunded, and its leader fired for asking for the resources he needs to do his job. In order to actually tackle these problems, we need to start taking them seriously and make sure this effort is properly funded and staffed with the right people. I have outlined a comprehensive 10-point plan through which we can both uplift our police and hold them accountable. You can read more at [www.sophiaforchicago.com](http://www.sophiaforchicago.com).
2. What will you do to improve public safety and increase our sense of security?
  - a. A Safe Chicago is a Strong Chicago. We must ensure our city is a uniformly safe place to live, work and raise a family. My public safety plan is comprehensive in nature addressing real systemic change as well as the emergency of now -violent crime. It is designed to address the immediate need for new leadership and increased staff while prioritizing diversity, modern comprehensive training, and providing our officers the resources to prioritize community policing. While arrests for violent criminals are of course necessary, we simply cannot arrest our way out of crime. We need a comprehensive approach that is collaborative and community focused.
3. How will you improve the relationship between police and communities?
  - a. In part by Committing to real criminal justice reform. We must address the cultural divide among officers and communities of color. We must fully implement the federal consent decree. But in addition, we must commit to fully funding violence prevention. Mayor Lightfoot only spent \$5 million of \$85 million appropriated to mitigate violent crime.
4. What alternatives to current policing practices will you pursue to improve public safety?
  - a. As mayor, I will fund \$200 million to scale up anti violence programs that are proven effective and create a Department of Gun Violence Prevention. We can further reduce tensions by rapidly expanding alternative responses to 911 and developing additional pre-arrest diversion programs for substance abuse, mental health issues, and extreme poverty.

### **6) Urban Planning / Housing / Homelessness / Infrastructure**

1. Will you support the Bring Chicago Home Ordinance? Why or why not?
  - a. I support a compromise version of the ordinance. I think that we do need more funds to ensure access to housing for Chicagoans, but believe that the current proposals may be too much of a tax increase.
2. What will you do to promote affordable housing preservation and development?
  - a. With housing costs rising faster than incomes, I understand that in order to improve housing affordability, we need better alignment of zoning, taxes, and subsidies. By leveraging multiple solutions to create a wider array of housing types across Chicago, we can ensure a healthier distribution of affordable homes of all shapes and sizes. Chicago can optimize opportunity zones to create more affordable housing. I will work with community stakeholders and business leaders

- to create a vision for residential and mixed-use housing. I am focused on taking the immediate need to deliver on the thousands of affordable housing units needed in the city. With more than 30,000 people waiting for housing assistance from the CHA we cannot afford to wait.
3. How would you work with communities and local community organizations regarding neighborhood development and investing in Chicago's disinvested communities?
    - a. I would bring the same spirit of collaboration in development to the fifth floor as I have had in the City Council. I lead one of the 4 striking developments in the City - Bronzeville Lakefront, the former Michael Reese Site. There are three others: the 78, Lincoln Yards and the Obama Library. Each of the others have experienced some protest and acrimony. Again, I brought all of the interests to the table and now have a development where the developer and the community are both able to see an upside and is being heralded as one of the most equitable in the country by The NY Times.
  4. How do you plan to improve residential streets, sidewalks, lighting, parks, and green alleys, and bicycle lanes and paths?

## **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?
  - a. As Mayor, I will follow in the steps of Harold Washington to protect our immigrant community through executive order, through lobbying Congress and through joint support with our Congressman, state leaders and our Governor. Chicago has a long history of being a welcoming city for immigrants. I believe that Chicago should be a welcoming and safe city regardless of their citizenship status. As Mayor, I would support policies that help immigrants by issuing municipal identification documents and driver's licenses to all residents; providing wrap around services to provide housing, job training and language support.
2. Will you increase funding to the Department of Family and Support Services to help address the current migrant crisis?
  - a. 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?
  - a. I will also seek to increase neighborhood schools and neighborhood components of selective enrollment schools. I will also increase the trades, tech and STEAM education in schools. We will support partnerships to support disengaged students. Great schools drive and stimulate economic development to sustain great communities. I believe that every child deserves an excellent education regardless of their zip code or neighborhood. As Mayor, one of my top priorities will be to ensure that every school open in Chicago is a school any parent can be proud of and trust with the education of their children. I will support high quality schools of choice that serve a clear need in the community.
2. What is your position on charter schools?

- a. I have a record of building opportunities for youth. As a former educator, I diversified classes at the Latin School of Chicago and promoted co-curricular education at Chicago Public Schools. With an eye on equity, I helped establish the Ariel Community Academy to provide the North Kenwood-Oakland residents with the same quality education that my students at Latin received. As President of the Kenwood Park Advisory Council, I never stopped fighting to expand youth programs to keep children safe and engaged. I believe that every child deserves an excellent education regardless of their zip code or neighborhood. As Mayor, my top priority will be to ensure that every school open in Chicago is a school any parent can be proud of and trust with the education of their children. I will support high quality charter schools that serve a clear need in the community.
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?
  - a. Our newly elected school board should be a partner with the city and state to create a great educational experience for every student. Schools have limited vehicles to raise revenue and will continue to depend on the city for resources. However, we will endeavor to bring the school district to financial independence but not at the expense of our students, families and educators.
4. Do you support a continued moratorium on school closings?
  - a. Investing in public education is the most important thing we can do to secure the future of Chicago. We must use our tax dollars to create a public education system that helps every child reach their full potential regardless of the zip code in which they live. Closing schools is an important decision that can have grave consequences on a community. We will seek to increase density, housing and bring quality education and schools to every community. Decisions will be made in context and with community.

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