

St. Petersburg Mayor – August 24, 2021 Primary Election

Robert Blackmon

Occupation: St. Petersburg City Council Member, Property Rehabilitator

Professional Experience: Owner/Manager of a portfolio of commercial and multifamily real estate units in St. Pete. Founder/Partner, Blackmon Properties,

having renovated over 250 dwellings in the past 10 years throughout the city.

Education: St. Petersburg High School, Graduate, 2007

Florida State University, Graduate, 2011. Major: Political Science. Dual Minors, Communications and Emergency Management

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

I am a consensus-builder who is ready and willing to work with all stakeholders to build a better future for St. Pete, but I'm not afraid to stand up for what I believe in, too. I have worked with Democrats and Republicans to rebuild the Science Center and promote affordable housing, but I fought for small business owners to have the chance to survive the COVID crisis. As an award-winning residential preservationist and renovator myself I know what it takes to build something lasting that helps advance the community while maintaining its character and history.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

I was the first member of City Council to propose an end to the state of emergency over COVID; I believed correctly that incentivizing and promoting vaccination was the best way to prevent sickness while not penalizing business owners from being able to survive and grow despite the challenges of the past year. My colleagues, opponents in this race and the current Mayor all stood against me, but we had an infection rate that was at or better than other cities our size while avoiding the mass closures seen by cities that waited too long to reopen.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

Trop must stand for transparency, reciprocity, opportunity and patience. We must be open about what our goals are and what it's worth to achieve them; ensure any redevelopment honors the Midtown community and provides opportunity for longtime St. Pete residents, including affordable housing; and we must be willing to take the time to negotiate with all stakeholders. I will not give the Rays any deal without tangible, concrete items in return, but I will not reject their overtures outright because they don't fit my priorities, either.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

St. Pete has the best police force in the world. While we can always be better, we are already promoting reforms and have realized the goals of the Eight Can't Wait movement while adding accountability like body cameras and promoting better community relations. What the community is crying out for now is more policing for communities suffering a spate of violence, so my priorities will be to expand our ability to respond to mental health crises with specialized non-law enforcement resources while fully funding the police and directing them to take the steps needed to stop the violence.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

We have a lot of sustainable and natural measures that will help restore our shoreline and fight red tide, like supporting mangrove restoration and oyster gardens to both clean the bay + create natural barriers to flooding. I will dedicate city resources to doing this at no cost to homeowners who need it. My administration will immediately prioritize water equity on the South Side and both expand and deepen waste and stormwater infrastructure in

Midtown and South Side. Additionally, I fought on Council for a Lakes Management Department to deal with just such problems. We need to fund it fully.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

True equity starts with financial equity. I plan to create a community development fund by selling our Municipal Services Center and relocating civil servants to Midtown, which will allow us to provide sustainable seed funding to entrepreneurs in Midtown and South Side and bring new consumers to the area, building a sustainable foundation for businesses without pushing gentrification of existing neighborhoods. Downtown is thriving without the need for intervention. We must spread our attention and resources to communities that have not traditionally received the same level of focus.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

As a property owner whose housing is 100% affordable to families below 120% AMI myself, I recognize the challenges being faced by both owners and residents of housing across the city. I will create affordable housing opportunities by buying and refurbishing existing housing for at-cost sale to families making under 120% AMI as well as pushing incentives to increase housing supply, like waiving permitting fees for developers building affordable housing. Instead of focusing on rentals, I intend to utilize city dollars to provide low or no income mortgages to those in need.

Peter Boland

Occupation: Restaurateur

Professional Experience: Co-Founder & Managing Partner of The Galley: A St. Pete Tavern, est. 2016

Co-Founder & Managing Partner of The Ship's Hold, est. 2019

Founder & Managing Partner, Mary Margaret's Olde Irish Tavern, est. 2020

Operations Manager, MacDinton's Irish Pub, 2016

General Manager, Kings Street Food, 2015-2016

General Manager, Courigan's Irish Pub 2009-2015

Education: Graduate of St. Petersburg High School, class of 2002.

Attended St. Petersburg College

Attended College of Central Florida

Attended Art Institute of Tampa

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

As a native of St. Pete, self-made businessman, who's been through real hardship, I think the most notable traits I possess that equip me to be Mayor are humility & passion. I've been humbled in life to know my strengths and weaknesses. I'm humbled to serve others: my city, my teams, my friends and my family.

I'm passionate about doing the right things & being proactive. I want to serve St. Pete as a moderate, small business-minded, authentically local, problem-solver. I don't care about accolades, I care about results.

St. Pete is the best place to live, but needs to get it's priorities set.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

As a leader of over 60 employees, No issue stands out more than our response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. On a Friday night at 8pm, we approached every table at my flagship restaurant to inform them that we were closing immediately as members of our team tested positive for Covid.

After brief discussions with fellow leaders, we swiftly determined that honest transparency was what the public, our staff, and our guests deserved. We subsequently closed our restaurants for 12 days until we got everyone tested. We did the right thing and spoke on behalf of our entire industry.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

We envision the most sustainable mixed-use neighborhood that we can possibly engineer - lots of greenery and trees, wonderful restoration of Booker Creek, energy-efficient and hurricane-proof, state-of-the-art, durable, smart-grown developments, for people of all walks of life, to be celebrated for decades to come.

First step is swift and stern action to get a deal done with the Tampa Bay Rays for an extended lease at either the Tropicana Field site or at Al Lang Field on the waterfront. We cannot proceed with this 86-acre redevelopment project without the fate of pro-sports being settled.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

We ask our Police to do too much. They need better technology and resources to help serve the interests of the public. As Mayor, I look forward to doing all I can to support a specially trained, compassionate, agile, and adept, police force. When I'm Mayor, every squad car will have a dash camera, and every patrol officer will have a body camera. Dense, vibrant, and high-crime areas will have more public cameras that can be accessed in the pursuit of justice. Our goal will be to have the best compensated and best trained police department. Compensation comes 1st, followed by accountability.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

We need to improve our disaster preparedness citywide. In case of a climate-related emergency, everyone that needs to should be able to evacuate and shelter safely and efficiently. We will gather experts and target any inefficiencies in the current plans.

We need to plant lots of trees and mangroves all over our city, and foster a healthy Tampa Bay estuary with bivalves and oyster beds that naturally clean our waterways.

We also need to do all that we can to combat the devastation wrought from the Piney Point disaster in order to recover from the devastating effect of super red tide events.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

As Mayor, I will cheerlead the virtues of our city and aggressively compete to attract the best events, industries, new developers and public servants.

St. Pete should be first in the state, region, and country on key issues like modern policing, 21st-century transit options, and universal broadband access.

We need to aggressively strive for a St. Pete with equality of opportunity, without getting distracted by unrealistic focus on equality of outcomes.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

We have to create public-private partnerships to connect those in need with resources & organizations that serve to help. We also have to help make sure those public services and organizations are adequately equipped.

Also, we need to be practical & understand that Pinellas County is 99% built-out, & less than 1% of homes are for sale. It's basic economics-demand is high, supply is low, there just isn't enough housing options. We need more housing, with up-zoning, opening more opportunities for accessory dwelling units, plus also improving our building standards & the building department.

Michael Ingram

Occupation: Political Science Student

Professional Experience: I helped keep young people on the right track and out of trouble in my time with the Sixth Judicial Circuit and I intend to continue that trend and to expand it to give young people more chances to achieve professional experience at a young age.

Education: I am a graduate of St. Petersburg High School and a political science student at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

I believe that being a young person gives me the unique advantage of looking to ensure that not only will my children have a good future in our city as a result of my leadership, but also that I will be able to see a bright future for our city. I was born and raised in St. Pete, and I'm not going anywhere. I will be held accountable by anyone for where I lead our city in 60 years or more.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

As the leader of Heat Wave, Florida's only drum corps, I had to make decisions that weren't popular. I had a responsibility to every member to ensure their safety, and that meant telling the staff that they couldn't do some things. There were times when the staff was asking too much of the members that they were teaching and had to be convinced to give breaks and take it easy when a deadline was fast approaching. It takes effort and confidence to tell a superior that they need to do something differently, and it takes a level head to listen and understand, but both are needed in a leader.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

My top priority for the Trop is affordable housing. We are in a housing crisis and it will only get worse. Average rent in St. Pete is higher than a full month's salary for a full-time minimum wage worker. We need to ensure that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is used to make sure that people who call St. Pete home aren't forced out. We also need to make sure that we are prioritizing our local businesses in the Trop site. Local businesses are what drive our economy. What makes St. Pete great are the people and local businesses, and we have to make sure we prioritize them above investors.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

My top priority for the police force and the community is trust and accountability. While my full trust is in the members of the St. Pete Police Dept, we need to ensure that there is never a place to hide for white supremacy or any abuse of power, now or in the future. To do so, we need to provide body cameras and dash cameras for every officer and car, as well as create an external body to handle complaints against officers to increase transparency. Creating trust between the police and the community is essential to the ability of the police to protect the community and keeps both safer.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

My priority for protecting our city from environmental hazards is to focus on the most vulnerable neighborhoods. Our city can be quickly protected as a whole by creating living shorelines that will become a self-sustaining shield against the environment for us. After the creation of this natural shield, which will need fewer investments than a man-made sea wall, funds and attention need to be directed at the most vulnerable areas, such as Snell Isle and much of south St. Pete. Like with many issues, an equitable solution is necessary to ensure the most vulnerable areas get the help they need.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

To achieve equitable economic development, we need to focus on our local businesses. Beach Drive and Central Avenue are known for being home to many of St. Pete's best-known local businesses, but we need to expand our investment into local businesses elsewhere. It may be beneficial to bring in outside investment and jobs to our city, the return on investment in our local businesses is significantly higher and gives residents significantly more economic freedoms and results in a stronger community, rather than just another job and another store. We need to move opportunities out to everyone.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

We need to ensure that everyone has not just a bed to sleep in, but a home. We need to ensure that all new developments include some affordable units. If a developer doesn't want to provide affordable housing for their "premium" housing site, they will pay a small premium to do so. A small increase in property tax of around 20 cents per \$1000 of assessed value will ensure that affordable housing could be created to make up for the lack of any at the new development. This integration ensures there are no "bad neighborhoods" with affordable housing, but creates an affordable city to live in.

Torry Nelson

Occupation: Entrepreneur

Professional Experience: Gulfcoast Legal Services

Professional Arena Football Player

Stepping Stone Housing Corp.

Dept of Advisors LLC.(Current)

Education: A.A Health St Pete College

B.A Recreation Sports Management Henderson State University

3 years J.D Program Taft Law School

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

Unbiased, Honest, Brave, Leader, Humble, Courageous, Unselfish, Self control, Optimism, Gratitude, Innovative, Survivor, Hard worker, Spirituality, integrity & loyalty to name a few. I literally have been lucky enough to have been blessed with all these characteristic traits if not more. At the age of 3, I lost my grandmother this traumatic event was the start of many life testing circumstances that I have navigated thru that has prepared me to be a leader and the person I am today.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

By founding and operating Stepping Stone Housing Corp for a decade under constant scrutiny from various City departments prepared me for the job as Mayor. Even though the experience of dealing with malicious prosecution I never wavered and sacrificed personal monetary gains to continue operating the shelter for the greater good of the community. I appreciate this lesson because without it I wouldn't be the qualified candidate I am today.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

I have already begun the process for moving forward with the Tropicana Field site. I have scheduled a meeting with the Rays Public affairs Dept on the 22nd of July. I will be discussing a possible relocation and reconstruction of Al Lang stadium and the Albert Whitted Park to create a waterfront stadium that will catapult an economic explosion and thus creating a world renowned hub for major sporting events for years to come. In addition, freeing up the 86 acres currently occupied by the Rays for economic development and also creating more parking for our high density growing downtown area.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

I would like to introduce our officers to the community and break the ice through little league sports. Kids and parents who participate with the Police departments Pal league would start a dialogue between parents and kids that will create relationships that will last a lifetime. Furthermore, at risk low income delinquent youth could be one of our main persons to focus on rehabilitating. I would also like to increase Officers presence in vulnerable areas prone to gun violence and drug trade. I feel more of a up close presence will deter the frequency of any potential crimes from occurring.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

Tighter inspections in regards to private residents lateral sewage lines would drastically decrease overflows for our waste water plant during hard rain falls. Illegal connections that make for leaky and loose pipes increase the unneeded capacity for our waste water plant. This quick fix would diminish the constant flooding of minority communities during hard rain falls. Furthermore, as budget allows we will continue to vigorously replace our out dated sewage line until completion. Furthermore, replenishing our shore lines and hardening up all of our sea walls will also be a main priority.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

Great jobs is the key by improving the service within the building department in order to make doing business in the city a positive experience and a focus on retaining existing businesses and attracting new business. Furthermore, catching up to speed the rest of our communities to our downtown development. By working with our organized neighborhood associations leaders to develop plans for improvement and address problems as they arise. Moreover, adding amenities that provide more opportunities to enjoy outdoor life and recreation. Aggressively working to become America's most cleanest city

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

Efforts will be made to provide St. Pete residents who are temporarily homeless due to unemployment or financial stress with access to temporary shelter, as long as they continue to take steps to transition back to self-sufficiency. In addition, providing residents whose homelessness results from alcohol or drug addictions with access to individualized treatment and shelter, so long as they take meaningful steps to change their behavior and return to self sufficiency. Furthermore, we shall have enough adequate income based housing for our self sufficient residents.

Wengay Newton

Occupation: Member of the Florida House

Professional Experience: Xerox Corporation Printing Systems Engineer 18 years, City of St. Petersburg – City Council 8 years, State of Florida – House of Representatives District 70 4 years and Newton’s Photography

Owner/Photographer.

Education: Associated Art Degree – Electronics Engineering, Microsoft MCSE, Xerox Corporation Management Certification, 12 Consecutive Years of Governance City and State Level.

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

I was born and raised in Midtown South St. Petersburg the most improvised area in all of Pinellas County. This area of greatest neglect has suffered 20 years of poverty and those conditions still persist today. I am the longest tenured candidate in St. Petersburg City Government. I have 12 years of consecutive governance, I have served with 3 Mayors, Baker, Foster and Kriseman. I have 8 years of service on the St. Petersburg City Council 2008-2016. I have served 4 years in the Florida Legislature 2016-2020. I am a Lifetime Member of the Florida House.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

Last year we arrested 54,772, 5 to 17 year old's, 65% Black Boys and Girls. The School to Prison Pipeline funds our DJJ with Explicit Bias against Black Boys and Girls merely because of the color of their skin. DJJ has \$86 million in the budget to fund Private Juvenile Jail Beds.

I voted with the House Majority for Parent Education Choice. If we allow Tax Dollars to Fund Private Juvenile Jail Beds, then Parents should be able to put their children in Private Schools no matter your income or zip code. I support Parent Choice for better outcomes.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

Preservation of Major League Baseball, Living Wage Jobs Opportunities For All, Affordable Housing, Minority Businesses, Office Space, Green Space and Blue Water Ways.

I am the only candidate that has served with 3 Mayors and seen the short comings of the negotiation process with the Rays. In a strong Mayor format of government, the Mayor doesn't VOTE. Council does all the Voting. So I would sit down with the Rays, Council and City Legal to work out an agreement that's best for the Taxpayers, the Rays and our City. I would only need 5 of the 8 Council Members voting in the affirmative.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

The 3 core responsibilities of local elected officials is: 1. Public Safety (Police, Fire and EMT) 2. Infrastructure (Sanitation, Sewer and Garbage) 3. Feel Good Amenities (Parks, Pools, Libraries, Senior Centers and Recreation Centers). When people live in fear of crime and violence, their communities reflect this loss of freedom, confidence and meaning. The first job of city government is to maintain the safety of its citizens. Mayoral involvement in our local police and public safety agencies is vital for better outcomes. I plan to fully fund our Police and create community partnerships.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

Smart Development – Create Policies for Smart growth practices can lessen the environmental impacts of development with techniques that include encouraging compact development, reducing impervious surfaces, safeguarding environmentally sensitive areas, mixing land uses. I was born and raised in Midtown South St. Petersburg the most impoverished area in all of Pinellas County. This area of greatest neglect has suffered 20 years of poverty and those conditions still persist today. As a Member of the Florida House, I get full member privileges to walk onto the floor of the Florida House and Lobby.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

8-year commitment to reach youth and working adults, providing them with the necessary tools and life experience to become confident in making financial decisions that unlock greater wellbeing for themselves, their families, and their communities in general. I believe that financial literacy is the civil rights issue of this generation. Financial literacy empowers all of us to make smart decisions – how to budget, save, borrow, and invest. It helps us buy a car, a house or pay for school. Conversely, the lack of financial knowledge creates barriers to fully participate in the American Dream.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

The only way to truly participate in the American Dream is Home Ownership. If you are paying \$1000 to \$1800 a month in rent you are already paying a mortgage, it's just not yours. Habitat for Humanity – Fully support and actively recruit clients for Habitat for Humanity. They provide affordable home ownership, equity, and generational wealth. Repurpose Commercial Space - Resilient residential demand and declining commercial demand can be accommodated by allowing re-use of vacant commercial space. Allowing Homeowners to construct ADU's - tiny homes, in-law apartments or granny flats and CDBG \$.

Marcile Powers

Occupation: Renaissance Woman

Professional Experience: Marcile Powers is an internationally published artist and filmmaker. She worked in nonprofit healthcare administration. Marcile left with the knowledge that our health is directly related to our planet and our food. She started Kenwood Organic Produce--a zero waste store, which grew into a contactless delivery service during the pandemic.

Education: Bachelors- Film: Directing

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

From education in directing to working at my own store, my best leadership quality is my ability to believe in others. I am able to see the passion that makes someone come alive and encourage them to follow that path. I already see a number of areas my opponents would excel in service to the city if I were to win.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

When we decide to pull funds to create a co-op at the Tropicana site. I know people are going to want bike ramps around Allendale for example and they will have to wait until we come up with a long term solution for the food deserts. I want to create an incentive to do a gun buy back from the city so we are much more appealing to sell guns to rather than children.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

I want the city to own the affordable housing units. In 2025, we'll have 80 days with a heat index over 100 degrees. With this new information, I believe fortifying the Tropicana Stadium and adding better lighting will have other baseball teams begging to come play indoors. The heat waves will be everywhere including Montreal. An air conditioned stadium is going to be an advantage. I also want to hold stakeholder surveys with the Southside, add green buildings and restore the water. I believe presented with the climate information I have learned the citizens will agree.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

I want officers to have internal family systems therapy so triggered people aren't behind triggers for the city. I also plan for officers to train in Non-violent Communication. NVC has worked to bring peace to warring tribes in Africa, working with war torn areas in the Middle East and I have had success using the methods in our city.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

We need green buildings that collect rainwater. We need to replant the mangroves. Sacred lands is actually increasing the size of their property with mangroves. If you know of anyone willing to let us plant mangroves, I have volunteers that will come out this week. I want to employ a carbon filter system through our sewers so we can become a carbon negative city.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

I want to create an area within Tropicana where street vendors starting out can set up and start selling their goods. The flea market being shut down has stopped a lot of small business owners who are starting out from making a living. I also want to teach gardening classes and offer more jobs to kids to start planting on city land. The neighborhood associations are wonderful and I want to support them to offer programs like emergency child care from neighbors and other services they deem necessary to offer.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

I want to create a program similar to unemployment for housing. Where people who have lost their job can get assistance with 2 months of mortgage or rent while they search for a new income source. This would be for everyone of every income bracket. I also want to restart the homeowners classes that assist people with down payments on their own homes. I want to incentivize the people owning their own homes versus real estate investors.

Darden Rice

Occupation: St. Petersburg City Councilmember

Professional Experience: Current Employment: St. Petersburg City Council, 2014-Present

Previous Employment: Progress Florida, Gulf Restoration Network (now Healthy Gulf), Sierra Club

Education: Bachelor of Arts Degree from Eckerd College (Graduated with Distinction in 2000)

Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program from Harvard Kennedy School (Certificate Program 2014)

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

I've been serving on St. Pete City Council for the past seven years, and I'll hit the ground running on day one to address the issues we face and focus on innovative ways to improve our city and ensure our economy works for everyone. Prior to serving in public office, I worked for years in the nonprofit sector with organizations fighting for working people and social change. I was combating climate change as an organizer with the Sierra Club, protecting our waterways as an advocate with Healthy Gulf, and fighting for increased access to quality, affordable healthcare with Progress Florida.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

During my last seven years on City Council, I took plenty of tough votes. In April, I made the motion to pause the Tropicana Field Request for Proposal process because it was moving forward without knowing what was happening with the Tampa Bay Rays. The Rays are entitled to 50% of the development rights under our use agreement until 2027. If we continued down that path, we would have opened the city up to lawsuits because the Rays must agree to anything happening on that site. This was a controversial vote, but I felt it was best for the future of the Trop site and the people of St. Pete.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

The Tropicana Field redevelopment is an incredible opportunity for St. Pete, and we must get it right by ensuring it fulfills the broken promises made to people displaced from the Gas Plant neighborhood. The entire process must be transparent, collaborative, and holds all parties accountable. I envision a new Trop site that includes good paying jobs, job training, and affordable housing. I also want to see a large park that provides a free, recreational green space where everyone can feel safe and welcome. We would also benefit from having St. Pete and Pinellas' first convention center here.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

My first priority as Mayor related to law enforcement will be to expand our Community Assistance and Life Liaison Program. This program sends trained social workers, instead of police officers, out to non-criminal and non-violent calls dealing with issues like homelessness, mental health crises, and suicide intervention. The program is working extremely well so far, and I would like to explore ways to expand it to give more help to people in our community. Additionally, I want to increase training for all law enforcement staff, especially on implicit bias.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

One of my top priorities will be to work towards our goals of reaching 100% reliance on clean energy by 2035 and an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. I'll also require buildings to be more resilient and incentivize developers to build energy-efficient, solar-ready homes. We'll partner with state and federal organizations on adaptation and advocate for climate change and sea level rise mitigation. Additionally, my Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will ensure none of our city policies perpetuate environmental injustice as we move forward and address past wrongs.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

We must do a better job of improving all neighborhoods, focusing on those with profound quality of life issues. A big piece of the equation is strengthening the city's Neighborhood Affairs division because it doesn't have the tools it needs right now to do this critical work. I envision this revitalized department helping to create more opportunities for small businesses to open throughout the city, in neighborhoods, and along transit corridors. It's time other neighborhoods besides downtown get the attention from city officials and the investment of public resources they deserve.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

There are many approaches we can and should use to provide more affordable housing, including community land banking, revolving loans, lot disposition, accessory dwelling units, and first time homebuyer programs. I also support locating affordable housing in commercially zoned areas and the Community Benefits Agreement. Rapid rehousing is another approach that effectively puts homeless or precariously housed people on a pathway to secure housing. As Mayor, I'll provide focused leadership on this issue, but I understand we must also bring good paying jobs to St. Pete to solve this crisis.

Kenneth Welch

Occupation: Former County Commissioner

Professional Experience: After receiving his BA from USFSP and MBA from Florida A&M, Ken returned to St. Petersburg as an accountant for Florida Power Corporation. He also served as Technology Manager for his father's small accounting firm.

Education: Melrose Elementary (1969 – last year of segregation)

Bay Point (Elementary & Middle)

Lakewood High

USF St. Pete 1985 Accounting Grad

FAMU 1987 MBA

What character traits, views and experiences do you possess that best qualify you to be the Mayor of St Petersburg? (600 characters)

As a 3rd generation St. Pete native, I've seen our city aspire to greatness. Now we have the opportunity to live our values of equity, equal opportunity & fulfilling the promises made to the often displaced AA community. I bring 40 yrs of small business experience in family businesses, 20 yrs of corp experience leading mission critical financial & back office systems for our largest organizations (Florida Power, SPC & Raymond James Corp.), & 20 years of leadership as

County Commissioner (3-term Chair). I bring the best combination of private, public sector & community leadership experience.

Those in positions of leadership must sometimes make unpopular or controversial decisions for the greater good. Please describe a situation in which you had to make such a decision. (600 characters)

During the COVID19 pandemic of 2020, I played a key leadership role in leading the County Commission to follow the recommendations of our medical professionals. We did so in the face of staunch opposition, including personal threats and attempted intimidation. We required masks, closed our beaches during spring break, and instituted a Safer At Home order. It was the right decision for our community, and Pinellas fared better than other counties.

What are your priorities for the redevelopment of Tropicana Field, and what actions will you take to move the process forward? (600 characters)

The overarching goals of housing, office space, jobs and equitable development is underpinned by our responsibility to honor the history of the Gas Plant community that was dislocated for 'progress'. As a product of that community, I know that the economic and societal benefits of a supportive community environment, particularly for young people, is invaluable. A robust Community Benefits Agreement is a key element of the Trop redevelopment.

The past two years have seen much discussion around both community safety and relationships between the police department and the communities it serves. As Mayor, what would be your top two priorities with respect to law enforcement in the city? (600 characters)

I've led the efforts to fund services and programs to remove mental health/homelessness and minor adult/juvenile offenses well before the "defund the police" term became popular. We've funded services, housing, diversion programs, outreach teams, etc., to de-escalate and provide alternatives. I'd led these efforts as County Commission chair, Chair of the Homeless Leadership Network, and Co-Chair of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, among other roles.

Research has found that St. Petersburg is one of the most vulnerable cities in the nation with respect to coastal flooding caused by storms and sea level rise. Both threats require our city to increase its resilience. How do you propose that the city address these threats? How will your plans include underserved and minority communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards and natural disasters? (600 characters)

Our community faces the unique issues of being the first built-out county and the most vulnerable area in the United States to the problems of sea-level rise and extreme weather. We must focus on continuing the funding and implementation of the Integrated Water Resources Master Plan, and the Integrated Sustainability Action Plan to build our infrastructure, mitigate and adapt to SLR, and build resiliency, including social resilience.

What actions will you take to promote equitable economic development across all communities and neighborhoods within the city? (600 characters)

Here are three:

Prioritization of the South St. Pete CRA to focus on education, poverty reduction, digital divide/internet access, nutrition, and entrepreneurial support

Prioritization of NTM-1 zoning to facilitate upzoning for missing middle housing

Creation of an Opportunity Agenda for Youth-focused on reaching at-risk children and providing wrap-around educational and family support, job training, and mentoring.

What will you do to address the need for safe, affordable housing in St. Petersburg? In particular, how will you support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction? (600 characters)

I've long led on housing. Under my chairmanship, the County Commission implemented the Community Housing Plan and funded the countywide Housing Trust Fund. As a result, we invested over \$100 million in funds supporting the development of more than 4000 affordable housing units. I will leverage those funds, process improvements, and partnerships to expand housing and prevent eviction and homelessness.