

City Council District B Candidate – Jay H Banks

1. How would you describe the current role and potential for Downtown?

Downtown New Orleans serves as a vital economic development center piece for the City of New Orleans. From its walk ability to its shops, restaurants, emerging residential base, attractions and corporate and government presence, Downtown New Orleans represents the best of our city at its core. The potential is unlimited for Downtown given its scale and proximity to surrounding neighborhoods and natural resources.

2. What do you feel are Downtown's most pressing challenges and how would you approach working with the DDD and Downtown stakeholders to address them?

The most pressing issue is managing crime and public safety in downtown New Orleans. We also must make sure we work to sustain and create economic opportunities downtown which build upon local character and culture. We cannot become a cookie cutter city. I would approach these issues and many more by first listening to the downtown stakeholders and seek their engagement in working together to solve our pressing issues facing downtown.

3. Things like getting asked for money when walking home at night, or encountering drunk people engaged in a verbal or physical altercation, create a sense of disorder that negatively impacts our stakeholders' perception of safety and livability. The DDD public safety team addresses these issues to the best of its ability, but especially in the Canal Street corridor significantly more City resources are needed to address the problems. How do you plan to address quality of life issues Downtown?

I would begin with first getting information from the downtown stakeholders and the NOPD to clearly understand the nature and extent of challenge we face. With this in mind, I would proceed to work to develop a fiscal (what financial resources are needed) and physical (enforcement and quality of life) four year plan with measurable results that we collectively can achieve by working together. I strongly believe we must work together to address any and all quality of life issues that may negatively impact our downtown. The DDD public safety team is vital in this process along with the NOPD and the downtown stakeholders to ensure that the resources are provided to make downtown NOLA one if not the best downtown in the United States.

4. How do you propose to address and prioritize the need for additional public infrastructure investment Downtown, such as crosswalks, sidewalks, and streetscape

improvements, which is critical to grow the New Orleans' economic & the job engine? Do you believe property owners should be required to repair sidewalks?

I believe we must look at downtown comprehensively and not in single units or blocks and link our funding for infrastructure projects to this effort. If we are to be successful in competing for jobs, talent and resources, downtown must keep pace in the way of its infrastructure. This begins with prioritizing our infrastructure efforts to align them with place making efforts for downtown. I will work hard to ensure that downtown NOLA continues to grown as a walk able downtown. Property owners should be operating from a perspective of insuring that their properties are maintained in an appropriate fashion and work to attract the best tenants that will support our downtown in being successful. Anything outside of this that creates unnecessary economic hardships for property owners should be avoided to the greatest extent possible.

5. What short term and long-term strategies do you propose to address concerns about Downtown's homeless population? How do you plan on working with the DDD as a partner to support the expansion of the Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) on the second floor of the former VA hospital site and the successful coordination and operation of the Low Barrier Shelter?

No doubt homeless is a problem in New Orleans. Short term, with the support of downtown stakeholders and homeless advocates, work to create an operational plan which looks at the physical elements (parks, bridges, sidewalks etc.) and how the City of New Orleans can adjust design and open space to mitigate the gathering of homeless populations. This would be combined with working with homeless advocates to ensure humane treatment and access to services. I would follow this with a long range implementable plan which lays out actionable items we as a community can work together on to address. Working with the DDD would entail a series of ongoing actions. First, making sure the DDD and NOPD have the resources needed to ensure the safety of individuals working, living, shopping, eating and visiting our great city in the immediate area. Second, work with the DDD, the City and Downtown stakeholders to ensure proper funding is in place to support effective operation of the facility. And third, work with the DDD, the City and Downtown stakeholders to link life skills and job training to the activities at the facility for any and all individuals and families seeking to make it an economic go in our city.

6. The DDD has worked with the City to craft sound sanitation, zoning and other city codes. However, the DDD still hears complaints that existing sanitation, zoning and other regulations are not routinely enforced and that permits are sometimes improperly issued to businesses which are non-compliant. Do you commit to enforcing all sanitation, zoning & building codes? Do you support giving a City Sanitation Ranger, paid for by the DDD, full authority to issue citations for code violations.

The answer is YES for the first and second aspects of this question. Enforcement plays a huge role in supporting the economic vitality of our downtown. With limited resources, the DDD Sanitation Ranger working to address these issues along with the City would go a long way. We will have to work together collectively to ensure once the enforcement issues are cited, it does not get caught up in the bureaucratic process nullifying our efforts to enhance sanitation enforcement efforts. This will require all of us working together.

7. Offering housing at a variety of price points is important to the economy of Downtown. Imposing requirements that the market cannot bear, however, can chill investment and constrain supply even further, exacerbating the affordability problem. How do you propose to encourage more affordable housing development in a way that will encourage developers to participate?

I will work to reduce regulations within our city processes that hamper development and make it more expensive to do so. Also looking at ways (working with DDD and stakeholders) to adjust the master plan as needed to support enhanced economic growth and mitigate regulatory barriers to development. I will examine linking of incentives to developers providing housing at price points that meet the needs of the NOLA residents that do not negatively impact their economic bottom line. I say all this to say that working together we will need to figure this out given the pace at which increased housing costs is a major issue in our city.

8. What improvements to transit (including a Downtown transit terminal), bike & pedestrian facilities, on-street parking, and other elements of a comprehensive mobility system do you propose?

My prospective is this, improvements that can support moving all human aspects of our city to accelerate economic growth and development will be a priority working with the DDD. More bus routes that operate effectively and on time and with appropriate shelter, pathways to increase walking and biking, parking and mixed use developments that are aligned with transit oriented development. Working with the DDD will help guide the strategy approach for downtown.

9. Recent investments in state of the art medical facilities and the presence of Tulane and LSU medical schools Downtown create a rare opportunity to make the New Orleans' Academic Medical Center a pillar of the economy by attracting patients from outside the region to leading edge medical care. How would you support the development of an Academic Medical Center in New Orleans?

I would support this effort by looking at ways to attract the best and brightest researchers, doctors, investors and entrepreneurial minds to NOLA. Increasing research, patents and attracting venture capital drives job creation. I would further work with the DDD, the City and State on ways to create jobs in this space for the average resident in New Orleans, realizing that the economic potential of an academic medical center which has the potential if done right can drive economic growth for our city. Lastly, I would work hard to ensure that the areas surrounding the medical complex(s) can be re-developed in such a way that it attracts mixed use development for people to live and work in the immediate area.