



GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage
City Council President Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: CARL STOKES (D)

The Greater Baltimore Committee has identified key policy priorities to drive discussion in the 2020 Citywide Elections. The priorities are:

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.
3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.
4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

Disclaimer: As a 501(c)4 organization, the Greater Baltimore Committee does not endorse candidates for public office. The information contained on this page and all engagement activities surrounding the election are for educational purposes only.

- 1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.**
 - **What legislative actions, if any, would you propose as City Council President to reduce crime and improve public safety in the City?**

Evidence is clear that good education and jobs for citizens that give them a sustainable income are the strongest deterrence to violence and crime in the cities neighborhoods. Regarding legislation, I would certainly be a proponent of the aerial surveillance planes as well as strong penalties for repeat violent offenders and non negotiable penalties for individuals using guns in the commission of crimes and for the carrying of illegal guns.

- **How would you allocate City budget dollars to crime reduction and public safety efforts? Please be specific regarding funding levels and programs compared to the current budget.**

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Current police department dollars should be reallocated to public safety/crime reduction initiatives i.e. mandatory extended day school programs and crime interruption efforts that are evidence based and proven such as Safe Streets and the Boston model, ROCAH. Investing current police dollars in these efforts, as well as strengthening police leadership and patrol deployment will give the crime reduction efforts far greater traction than even hundreds more officers. An audit of current police resources and the exact numbers for the prevention public safety initiatives must be done before a specific dollar amount can be determined but as much as 30% of the current dollars, including current overtime dollars, can and should be allocated to these efforts which would give us a stronger return on our dollars.

2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.

- **Do you have ideas or suggestions to reform the property tax structure in the City?**

I am the only councilperson who has introduced legislation on a comprehensive package of property tax reform for Baltimore in the last two decades. The package was shelved by the City Council leadership and never saw the light of day. I lobbied my colleagues at the time but could not get enough support to bring the legislation to a hearing and vote. I will forward the entire comprehensive package upon request.

- **What are your top three priorities or programs to grow Baltimore's tax base?**

Reduce property tax by 50% over a ten year period. Significant reduction in violent and person to person crime. Prove Baltimore can run an efficient, competent government by full regular financial and performance audits and the hiring of proven COO caliber directors and managers throughout government.

3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.

- **Baltimore City is at a crossroads and in need of strong, ethical leadership. Why are you the best candidate to lead the City Council into a new decade and chapter?**

I have stood in many instances alone or with a couple of other councilmembers over the last decade to demand audits of the Baltimore city government when no one else would do so. I have scrutinized the tax breaks, grants and TIF bills and fairly reported to my colleagues and the city at large the ins and outs of same. Others running have voted blindly with the Mayor or with special interests. I have voted independently time and again. I "opened" the books on financial inconsistencies and poor management of water bills and property tax inefficient practices. After much relationship building and citing of evidence based information, most current members and even city wide candidates now agree that I am and was correct in my earlier efforts.

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- **What are three actions that you would take to improve transparency and efficiency in the City Council operations and across City government as a whole?**

True and thorough audits of city agencies and some smaller operations Eliminating The city solicitor and the director of public works from the board of estimates. Overhaul IT operations by consulting GBC and local companies who have excellent and proven operations. (mayoral function, but will be insistent from Board of Estimates pulpit.)

- **How would you structure the Council under your leadership to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the City Council most effectively and efficiently?**

Current Council structure does not need an overhaul. The selection of leadership for committee chairs is the critical element for effectiveness.

- **Several charter amendments have been proposed and are pending legislative review and approval.**

- **What is your position on the composition and function of the Board of Estimates?**

I introduced legislation to change the status of the city solicitor end of director of public works to advisory instead of voting members. A couple of the candidates who are presently running for citywide office voted against that legislation and it failed in the city council some seven years ago. I still support the revised make up of the three elected officials, the mayor, the city council president and the comptroller making up that particular body

- **What is your position on granting the City Council with the authority to increase or move appropriations in budget category?**

I support that position as long as the budget remains balanced.

4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.

- **Under the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, Baltimore City stands to receive an additional \$500 million annually in State education aid by Fiscal 2030. In order to receive this additional funding, Baltimore City must increase its investment as well, by \$330 million annually by Fiscal 2030. According to Maryland Department of Legislative Services figures, Baltimore City currently spends less than 15% of its budget on education compared to a statewide average of 36%. What do you propose the City should do to meet the increased funding obligations? Please be specific in identifying areas or agencies that will see reduced appropriations as well as revenues that may be increased.**

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There are areas of inefficiencies currently within the education that must be addressed which will lead to dollars to reappropriate. Baltimore has significantly underfunded education significantly since the 1970's. That said, that has led to poor education outcomes leading to a decline in social outcomes and a declining school population resulting in less state and federal monies. As we raise the academic success of our schools and put resources into our underserved communities, parents will begin to again choose the successful schools, and the tax base will rise, increasing both our outside dollars as well as newly available tax revenues. The largest reallocation will come from the current police budget which is very much out of line with other jurisdictions, small and large. That budget should be a subset of a larger public safety budget where education, job training and social support are given much higher priorities. When those areas are effective, the needed dollars for policing will be markedly reduced. The greatest "new" money will come via the investments and increased revenues resulting from the reordering of the property taxes. We will begin to increase our education budget by an average of 1.5-2.0% a year with the sharper increases coming in the second half of the decade.

- **Currently, 0.2% of the City's budget is dedicated to workforce development. What is your position on increased funding for workforce training and adult education programs to reduce unemployment and adequately prepare City residents for jobs in high-demand industries?**

The budget is obviously not unlimited. Rather than create a false narrative of spending unforeseen monies, let's leverage what we have and reorder what we currently do in our vocational schools and have part of the programs run by third party operations I.e. unions and trades and private construction and tech industries. Baltimore public schools must reopen night adult education classes specific to the needs of specific employment skills.

5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

- **What is your position on transportation policy and funding in the City? What, if any, policy priorities do you have regarding transportation and mobility?**

My vision is of a city where hundreds of thousands of people who depend on public transportation are able to get around reliably, easily and safely. And a city where all the different modes of transportation are well linked through transit hubs and connections. Good public transportation meets lot of needs. These include commuting to and from jobs, as well as to and from our schools and colleges. Public transportation meets other needs as well such as shopping for daily or weekly needs, accessing healthcare, attending cultural and recreational activities and events, visiting with friends and generally getting around and exploring the city. A specific part of this vision would also be a revitalized North Avenue, the east west spine of the city, from one end of its 5 miles length to the other, which could be done most effectively by designing and building a modern streetcar line, similar to the one in Portland, Oregon and several other cities across the US. Other outcomes would be more efficient bus service. Although this is controlled by the state the city can greatly influence policies and strategies working with the state and our legislators. I would support someone in the city Department of Transportation to liaison with the state on bus transit to analyze and make recommendations jointly to better serve our residents.

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- **Do you support enhanced investment in transportation infrastructure, including that for pedestrians, bicycles, and scooters?**

Baltimore has come along way since issuing it's a bicycle master plan in 2006. And maybe some would say not enough. As Baltimore becomes a more sustainable city it must embrace the role of biking and walking. And in order to do that, we must respect a bicyclists land pedestrians. Once more bike lanes are installed, a robust public relations/educational campaign should continue to take place throughout the city. A policy I would highly consider for the safety of both bicyclists and pedestrians is the elimination of left turn on red and the removal of right on red where there are established bike lanes.

- **Recently, the City Council created a Transportation Committee of the City Council. Do you support the continuation of this Committee?**

I do.