

Nathaniel Harding, candidate for Ward 6

1. If elected to City Council, what will be your top priorities?

My top priority as a City Councilor will be to build upon the unity our city has already established. We owe our city's renaissance to the unity between our citizens, the business community and city government. This synergy must continue and cannot be taken for granted. In fact, we must expand this unified vision to include collaboration and cooperation among different levels of government. Whether it be federal, state, county, school districts, and other municipalities in the region, we must work together in order to become the metropolitan area we all know we can be. As we work through this process, however, we must always be mindful of our entire community and recognize how changes can affect people at all economic levels.

Throughout my participation on the MAPS 3 Advisory Board, I have been committed to making certain our city never loses the trust of the voters and continuing to do so will be a top priority of mine. Despite decades of success, in today's world that trust can dissipate in a moment. As a city councilor, I will be vigilant to make certain the promises made to voters on MAPS 3, last year's general obligation bond issues, and the Safer Streets Better City campaign are kept.

As for my priorities on more specific issues, I want to see Oklahoma City enhance (and live-up to) its brand as a city for the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs. While this requires a traditional pro-business climate, creating an enviable community for Millennials also means improving walkability and public transit, addressing mental health and substance abuse issues, and partnering to improve our schools. Throughout this process, it is important we are inclusive and embrace our diversity as the strength that it is.

2. What do you think the city's role should be in education, specifically as it relates to Oklahoma City Public Schools?

The future of our city is tied to the future of our public schools. While there are distinct roles laid out between city and school governments, we must work to utilize the expertise of our city government to aid in the governance of our schools. And while the city cannot unduly bear the load, it should be proactive in finding ways to partner with OKCPS. The simple fact is, our city staff has proven the ability to help lead a renaissance, and it's my hope we can see the city work to impart that experiential knowledge with OKCPS. Both entities should find a way to use their skillsets (and the trust the voters have in the city) to make necessary changes. Both serve much of the same population. The city alone cannot do this. It will take support and ownership from the business community and greater population to make this happen.

Additionally, we must work to create a culture that encourages innovation in our schools. It is clear, the establishment of John Rex has been very helpful to our city. As we are building this culture for our city and our business community, we need this to translate to our schools. As we use technology to modernize and improve our delivery of city services, we need to celebrate these accomplishments and help provide a roadmap for all our schools, not just those in downtown.

There are also other practical things our city can do to improve our schools. We must adopt policies which encourage mixed-income and affordable housing for young families in our city. The segmentation of wealth in our metro area does not help our schools. We also need to keep more families—who otherwise have the resources to move and find schools—from leaving. Poverty is undoubtedly a primary factor to consider in the poor performance of any urban school. By addressing housing, substance abuse treatment, and criminal justice reform, we can help alleviate some of the external issues which affect student performance.

- 3. Do you support allowing voters to decide whether to tax themselves to build a Regional Transit/Commuter Rail System in central Oklahoma (to connect, for example, Norman, Edmond, OKC and Tinker AFB)?**
Yes
- 4. Do you support the continued use of the City's Economic Development Trust to recruit companies to locate in OKC?**
Yes
- 5. With regard to future MAPS elections, do you believe funds, if approved by voters, should be used only to construct Transformational Projects/Development as in the past?**
Yes
- 6. Do you support the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts to support economic development in OKC?**
Yes
- 7. Do you support the use of eminent domain to acquire private property to facilitate the implementation of future MAPS projects?**
Yes
- 8. Do you support the state's Historical Building Tax credit which has been used by the City to renovate buildings such as the Skirvin Hotel?**
Yes
- 9. Do you favor a 1 cent increase in the City's Hotel/Motel tax to promote tourism in OKC?**
Yes