

Special Election for City of Orlando District 5

13 Questions from Spectrum News 13

1. Why are you running? If elected, what would be your top goals as city commissioner?

I'm running because not only was I raised in District 5, but District 5 has become the foundation and main motivation for the work I have been doing with my nonprofit for the past 8 years. Incidents of violence and systemic barriers have led me to become the activist that many know me as today. My top goals as a city commissioner would be for the affordable and sustainable housing of residents and for the public safety. Too often have people explained to me about the issues they face with higher rental rates and mortgage payments and have expressed the frustrations due to lack of resources. I have worked with countless residents in the past to fight for affordable housing on the City and County level and that would remain a priority. I also have always been a major advocate for the public safety of residents and anyone who visits the City of Orlando. I have worked on the community level to bring programs and events that have been centered around stopping the violence. With the community's involvement and the resources of the City, I believe we could change the way public safety is viewed in District 5.

2. Downtown Orlando was recently impacted by the law that bans public sleeping. How can District 5 meet the needs that arise as a result of the law's passage?

I believe that many laws recently passed that target public sleeping, loitering or to be direct, the homeless population, have missed the mark. I believe that we do need to have order when it comes to Downtown Orlando but criminalizing someone who is homeless is not the way to do it. I believe that we need to bolster our resources for those who are sleeping downtown and have nowhere to go. We need to work on places for people to go and find resources for employment, housing and sobriety. I believe that District 5 can meet what needs of this issue by providing resources to those who are homeless that are not just bandaids on the problem. We need critical and direct case management services and more resources to move those facing issues to various areas that do not only include District 5. I believe that working with great programs already in place and with experts that have solved similar issues in other cities can help us make the best moves going forward.

3. What is your view on the current state of safety in the downtown area? What would you do to address safety concerns downtown during peak bar/restaurant hours?

I believe the current state of safety in downtown can be improved. I believe that the solution isn't just displacing already established nightclubs and bars but working with the local business owners to make sure that they have the resources necessary to properly police their own establishments. I believe in metal detectors and other private forms of security that help increase the safety of those that patronize downtown during peak bar/restaurant hours. I also believe that there should be a "no-tolerance" attitude of any violent incidents that take place and people should know that Downtown's safety is a priority. I want to work with the local business owners and local law enforcement to improve the safety of Downtown and find a way for the nightlife and Downtown to co-exist.

4. Amid those downtown safety concerns, there have been several new initiatives to make the culture and business makeup of downtown more family friendly. How do you balance this new vision for downtown while continuing to support existing downtown businesses?

I believe that making Downtown more family friendly is a great idea. The City of Orlando is a beautiful city and has much to offer that extends beyond the theme parks or nightlife activities. I believe that having more family friendly establishments helps also increase public safety. I also am a believer that there is a way for more family friendly establishments and the already established businesses to coexist in harmony. There is a way to cater to families and young night club goers. We see something similar in City Walk at Universal Studios and Disney Springs, and I believe that the same can go for Downtown Orlando.

5. There are a number of affordable housing developments in District 5, but there is still a great need for more affordable housing. What ideas do you have to help those in need of an affordable, sustainable place to live despite options that are seemingly already there?

I believe that affordable housing is an issue that we have been facing for a great time. I, myself know the struggles of attempting to find affordable housing in Orlando and District 5 to be particular, and it can be a battle. I have talked to residents frustrated with the rent increases that have taken place and the property tax increase. I have dealt with these issues myself. I believe that a key part is to work with the correct developers that will bring properties that can sustain affordable housing and have no time limit on how long they will stay affordable. I believe that we need to make sure that we are encouraging growth for residents in opportunities in forms of employment, small business grants and CRA's designated to improve living for residents. There has to be more resources made available or things will not improve. There also has to be a conscious effort to make sure that sustainable, affordable housing is a priority.

6. While making way for many new businesses in Creative Village, some long-time residents have expressed concerns that historic Parramore has been erased. What will you do to ensure that the history remains intact and that Parramore proper is not forgotten?

This has been an issue in the community for a while. Many times we see gentrification taking place across the country and it has not been any different in District 5, citing Parramore as an example. I would work with local business owners that I know have been in Parramore for years and even decades, to make sure that they keep up with curve and growth of Orlando. I would make sure that historic landmarks are not erased and are properly persevered. I think it is not only about the landmarks that areas offer, but the generations of people that reside there. I would work to make sure that people still have a future in living in District 5 and are not moved out solely due to inflation of cost of living. The people are more important than anything.

7. District 5 will be home to a new \$500 million entertainment complex across from the Kia Center, which will include a hotel, retail space, housing, and parking, scheduled to open

in 2027. How do you ensure this doesn't just drive tourism, but also has a positive impact on other businesses and the residents of District 5?

I believe a way to insure that this is also advantageous to residents of District 5 is inclusion. Before we build the housing and build the venues, we should make sure the residents are allowed to be a part of the process. There also needs to be a stress on sustainable, affordable housing that will be permanent and not have a time limit. There also should be a push for local business owners to have a chance to have their business placed there.

8. How would you eliminate the food desert in District 5 and bring nutritious options to residents?

The way to work on this issue is to work with developers and grocery store chains and incentivize them to want to build in District 5. There is an overflow of corner stores and liquor store but very little grocery store options. This leads to an effect on the residents in the area they have to choose between convenience and health. There is so much growth taking place in District 5 that it make complete sense to also build more grocery stores and in relation, more health centers. Health and wellness should always be a priority.

9. How would you change the perception of the Parramore community when it comes to crime?

I grew up in Parramore and have seen it go through various stages. I believe that there is more good in Parramore on any given day than there is bad. There has to be a priority to cultivate that good into community awareness. I believe in the programs like PKZ and New Image Youth center whom I've works with in the past that offer a safe haven for many youth in Parramore. I believe that saving the youth and providing more opportunity for growth for the general population increases safer communities. Many crimes are done out of someone's perception of necessity and in order to change that, we need to change what is available. I believe in law enforcement doing their job and having their role but it is also on the community to have an option and fight for change. I believe in crime prevention programs ran by local agencies that have boots to the ground, like CVIP and Credible Messengers, two program I've worked to help bring to the city that address at risk youth and provide resources to help reduce crime. We need more resources more than anything.

10. We often talk about engaging youth in the community in an effort to address crime. What is your plan to engage parents? Will you include them in any initiatives to making the community safer for youth in the area?

I love this question. I believe that we can not change a young persons life until we change their environment and surroundings and that begins with the family and adults. I believe that there has to be more chance for growth and opportunities for the adults or they will not be able to be the best parents or even members of society. I'm an avid supporter of youth programs but also an avid supporter of resources in the form of employment, trades and education, rental and mortgage assistance, small business grants and more. We must raise our youth and help reaffirm our adults.

11. You have two areas in District 5, the Orlando Gasification Plant and Griffin Park Homes, that were subject to pollution and air quality concerns. What are your plans to clean up District 5?

I believe that we need to work on improving the forestation of District 5. There is a lot of growth taking place which means constant construction and trucks going through the area, which leads to pollution, coupled with already harsh environments that make it worse. I believe that we need to work on more developments of natural areas and work to keep those intact that remain. I believe we need to invest in infrastructure which includes the piping of the properties in District 5, along with over environmental concerns. There has to be an effort to work with the City to bring more attention to areas that can be sanitized and cleaned and turned into natural air producers with more trees and forestation. I would also work with experts that have great suggestions when it comes to attainable and affordable steps we can take as a City.

12. What would you do to increase accessibility to parks and other recreational activities for youth?

I have always pushed for more access to facilities and activities for youth. I believe that many miss out and it is not the City's fault, but due to lack of resources. I would work to find what money is available to help build more centers and parks that offer more access for residents. There also has to be a push for more help in the form of employees as many centers are already overworked and at their brink. I do want to work with the Center and Park managers to find out what needs and concerns they have in order to improve their facilities and bring great ideas to new and future projects.

13. If suspended Commissioner Regina Hill is reinstated, do you plan to run against her when the seat is up for reelection in 2025?

If Commissioner Hill is reinstated than it would really be up to the voters if they feel that I would be the best person for the job. My desire is not only to be the commissioner, but to make the best change. Whoever can accomplish that has my support.