

West Baltimore Strategic Alliance

1. Please tell about yourself.

I was born in Havana, Cuba in 1949 and received my early education in Christian Brothers' schools. I came to the United States with my family on October 21, 1961, locating in Baltimore in June 1963. In 1973, I became a United States citizen. I attended parochial school in Baltimore City, finishing high school in the third graduating class of Cardinal Gibbons School. After high school, I attended Loyola College and Towson State University, majoring in history and political science, returning to college again in the 1980's to study psychology at the University of Baltimore.

I have held jobs ranging from language teacher (during five years in Haiti), car salesman, and director of development for my old high school. I am currently working in the security business to support my activities as a citizen politician. I hope to serve the citizens of Baltimore as the next President of the Baltimore City Council.

2. Why are you running for office? Why should voters be excited to vote for you?

The office of City Council President is independently elected, so it should be filled by an independent minded person. I am that individual. I will not get in to "go along to get along." Moreover, I will take the lead by effectively cutting my own salary and benefits--putting a portion of my salary as City Council President in an escrow account to start paying down the city debt - and encouraging and even demanding that the rest of the City Council members do the same, if they want to consider themselves leaders and not rulers, living off the citizens of Baltimore.

3. Beginning with the most recent position, please list all public offices you have held, including boards or commissions. Please indicate whether the position was elected or appointed, the dates served, and what leadership roles you may have held.

I have been Chair of the Maryland Libertarian Party (1992-1994) and am currently a member of the Executive Board (since 2008). These are elected positions. By only looking for people who are already in the system, you only get more of the same. An extensive resume inside the system – far from being a positive, should be a negative.

4. What is your economic development strategy for the city? The 9th District? What specific steps will you take to advance your strategy? How will you tap the human resources of the ex-offender population?

Baltimore needs to become an independent, prosperous city, not a dependent of Annapolis and the federal government. The entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Baltimore needs to be unleashed by eliminating the licensing requirements and regulations that favor a select few by reducing competition. Taxes need to be reduced, and sometimes eliminated (container tax and snack tax). Property taxes need to be reduced but also reapportioned, taxing only the value of the land and not improvements. Taxing improvements punishes those landlords and property owners who make improvements to their property. Many ex-offenders were incarcerated as a result of the so-called "war on drugs," a disastrously failed public policy. For these, it should not be held against them. Those who became ex-offenders as a result of committing violence against others should be judged on a case by case basis.

5. The communities located within a half-mile of the West Baltimore MARC station were devastated by the construction of the I-170/I-40 "highway to nowhere" and have been blighted for years. How important do you view this area in relation to the rest of the city? What are your top three to five priorities in this area?

The highway to nowhere is a very good example of eminent domain gone haywire. This monstrosity was inserted into a viable neighborhood and nearly destroyed it, as it turned out, for not even any purpose at all. This sort of thing has been happening throughout our nation, not just here. People are being

driven out of their homes and businesses by state and local governments enacting distorted forms of eminent domain, taking over properties and handing them to others who somehow are supposed to increase tax revenues for the city. In many cases, just like the highway to nowhere, the businesses that received this stolen property didn't even come.

How do I view this area of Baltimore in relation to the rest of the city? Well, when a sizeable portion of the city is ailing, the city is a sick city. Rather than talking about 3-5 priorities, there is one priority, and that is the economic independence of this blighted part of our city. Again, in order to do this we need to lower property taxes (renters pay property taxes indirectly and pay them nevertheless) we need to apportion the property tax so that only land value is taxed and people are not punished for keeping up their property. We need to eliminate or at least roll back the licensing and regulations that keep entrepreneurs from getting started and bringing goods and services to their community as well as jobs.

6. Do you feel that the average citizen is well-informed about how economic development decisions are made in the city? What steps would you take to ensure open and interactive processes for gathering community input into development decisions?

No, the average citizen is not well informed about economic development, or most things that happen in this city. What to do about it? Well, for starters, citizens are going to have to come to grips with the fact that the city, which has been run for more than 45 years by one political party – the Democrats – will produce the incestuous relationships of politicians and developers, and other who benefit at the expense of the many. Citizens have got to challenge the political monopoly of this town. That will be a start towards citizen awareness.

7. There has been a lot of controversy about the role of incentives in development. What rule should taxpayer money play to support private and public-private sector development, assuming these developments cannot be achieved otherwise? What mechanism would you propose be used to evaluate which projects are “worthy” of public investment?

Tax payers' money used to support private development is corporate welfare. Stop it. If a private company cannot do what it needs to do without public money, then it should not be doing it. So-called private-public sector development is really Frankenstein's child. The city is littered with public-private development projects that develop nothing except money in the pockets of certain individuals.

Outside of infrastructure and public safety, no project is worthy of public investment. Lower the property tax; reapportion how the property tax is collected as I mentioned before. Eliminate the onerous licensing regulations and fees that stymie from-the-ground up entrepreneurial activity. This is how we're going to get to a prosperous, independent Baltimore.

8. History shows us that gentrification often results in the displacement of long-time residents. History also shows us the way to prevent displacement is to preserve well-managed affordably-priced rental housing throughout the community and not concentrated in a few select areas. What policies will you pursue to increase or preserve at-risk affordable housing in the West Baltimore MARC area? City-wide?

Again, in order to provide better affordable housing, we need to reduce the property tax and reapportion how that tax is collected to tax only the land value. Eliminate the onerous licensing regulations and fees. Eliminate zoning restrictions to allow mixed use of property – throughout the city. This was common in the days when Baltimore was a thriving city. Honestly, I have to tell you, looking at your questions it seems to me that you are operating from the same old tired methods that have driven this city into the ground. We need to depart from this – the public private “investments,” corporate welfare, subsidized rental housing, etc.

9. What steps will you take to sustain and improve our public transportation system?

Our transportation system is based on a monopoly—a state run MTA, the odious medallion system for taxicabs. The fact is that so long as vehicles are road worthy and drivers have good driving and insurance records, anyone should be allowed to provide transportation within the city of Baltimore. This would create jobs and businesses. Government regulation should be limited to preventing fraud, and nothing else. The current monopoly produces a transportation system that is inadequate and extremely expensive.

10. How will you convince your fellow elected officials to support your initiatives? What is your negotiating style?

To convince my fellow officials to support my initiatives, I will use the truth as I see it, demonstrating that doing things as they have been done only leads to failure and the enrichment and power enhancement of a few. My negotiating style—I am respectful and empathetic, but I don't hold back what I see to be the truth.