

NEW ORLEANS
JUNE 2018



CITY HALL

From Answers to Action

Post-Election Policy Making:
Effective Government

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BACKGROUND

The mission of the Bureau of Governmental Research is to provide independent research to support informed public policy making and the effective use of public resources. BGR recognized that each candidate entered the race with a vision for improving City government and delivering more effective services to citizens.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

In July 2017, BGR asked all candidates to share their ideas on how City government could operate more effectively.



Please give three examples of how the City should improve its use of existing public resources to achieve more effective City government.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell

All three of these examples deal with how the City interacts with other governmental entities.

The City should negotiate with the state and with local public entities to receive a larger percentage of future hotel occupancy and sales tax revenue, which could be directed towards an infrastructure and maintenance fund.

Real estate tax abatements and IDB PILOTs (Industrial Development Board's Payment in Lieu of Tax arrangements) could be more transparent and consistent with faster application times, thus providing a better development climate which would increase property tax revenue, and could go toward paying for public priorities. The City could work with the state and with the IDB to reform this system.

The City should work with New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) to get more of its lots into the hands of low to moderate income homeowners and affordable housing developers. This would both address the city's housing shortage, and put properties on the tax rolls, allowing the City to increase revenue for priorities.

Councilmember At-Large Helena Moreno

1. The City should utilize our newly built and highly flexible public school spaces to forge stronger partnerships across recreational entities (such as NORDC, City Park, and Audubon), providing enrichment and allowing our schools to be community resources 365 days a year.

2. The City should increase RTA's focus on our working families. Maximizing efficiencies could create a transportation network that alleviates housing crunches and provides reliable transit for all working people.

3. The City should synchronize Orleans Parish Prison with our health system - especially Louisiana Medicaid - as an essential mitigation effort for our burgeoning mental health crisis. If we are able to get individuals with mental health challenges connected to our existing health care coverage, we can better ensure they won't be repeat clients of our criminal justice system and may seek the treatment they need without concern for lack of resources.

Councilmember At-Large Jason Williams

Reduce Overlap and Duplication

We have done a lot to streamline the way the City functions, but there is still room for improvement. There are synergies between departments with shared goals that aren't being fostered, and overlapping needs that have resulted in duplicative expenses. ...

Accessible, user-centric government

One question that isn't asked enough is: Effective for whom? We need to think about government from the perspective of the community, not just fellow government officials or politicians or policy wonks – to the average New Orleanian.

How are people in our community interacting with the City on a daily basis? Is it fair? Is it accessible and equitable and treats everyone with the same respect they deserve? ...

When our kids are educated, safe, and employed, then government can focus on the most effective ways to fill potholes. Effective government happens when we can stop reacting to our community in crisis, when folks have good jobs and educations and paths toward a clear future – not a pipeline to prison. We are still failing over half of the residents in our city, and until we stop the violence and discrimination we are always going to be less effective as a [governmental] body because we are too busy being in crisis.



Please give three examples of how the City should improve its use of existing public resources to achieve more effective City government.

CONTINUED

Councilmember Joseph “Joe” Giarrusso, III (District A)

1. The first job of government is to make citizens safe. Therefore, we need to make safety the top priority of the city budget.
2. Work with Mayor’s office on establishing best practices for Department of Public Works and Sewerage and Water Board for drainage and ensure coordination between departments in timely repairing streets.
3. Ensure city contractors are paid timely.

Councilmember Jay H. Banks (District B)

1. Coordinate law enforcement across local/state/federal levels to truly expand our manpower.
2. Ensure much higher levels of revenue collection from our current tax base so that we needn’t put the burden on families and seniors.
3. Return city assets - like land etc. - to commerce either by involving nonprofits or conveying it to the private sector. The City should not be allowing its property to become blighted. Any city property should be used to provide services or be unloaded so others may use it effectively.

Councilmember Kristin Gisleson Palmer (District C)

1. Conduct a survey of publicly owned buildings and properties to determine which are suitable for reintroduction into commerce.
2. French Market Corporation is an example of properties that could have increased revenues through strategic public-private partnerships.
3. While I was on city council, I streamlined appropriations requests by requiring all departments to submit their budgets using a uniform template. We need to further increase accountability and transparency practices within the appropriations process.

Councilmember Cyndi Nguyen (District E)

(1) City government needs to practice by providing effective and efficient service delivery to its citizens. One strategy that I will explore is how to remove layers that have prevented citizens on taking care of their business with city government efficiently. It may be leverage technology to streamline delivery and evaluating a collaboration method. (2) Improve the work culture for city employees. Enforcing incentives to reward performance or exploring other ways to motivate staff. (3) Develop a Community Resource Directory that will outline how to maneuver through city government. The directory will be translated in Vietnamese and Spanish as a start. The directory should be developed using a simple format and procedures that will guide citizens through city services.

Overall, as the next City Councilperson, our office will hold “pop-up” in both the East and the Lower Nine to create easy access and opportunities for citizens to connect with the City Council office. Pop-up can be at Senior Centers, the library, recreational centers and etc. Another idea is to utilize social media as another form for citizens to connect with city council.