



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Joseph E. Simmons

Age: --

Family: Single, No Children

Hometown: Kansas City, Kansas

Lived in Oakland since: 1995

Education: BA and MPA Kansas State University;

MDiv. Virginia Union University

D.Min. United Theological Seminary

Occupation: CEO & Senior Pastor,

Employer: Greater St. Paul Church

Political experience: Democratic Party

Notable affiliations:

-Pastors of Oakland

-Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

-100 Black Men of America, Bay-Area

-Black Elected Officials and Faith Based Leaders of the Bay Area

1. What do you see as the greatest challenges when it comes to providing residents with a livable, affordable and safe community?

Based on conversations that I've had with District 4 residents, we need to cultivate a transparent, visible and responsive City Hall that supports the following identified challenges:

a) Housing Security & Homelessness

There is a need to review, utilize and engage government, non-profit and philanthropic community resources to address housing insecurity and homelessness. In addition, effective programs that provide aid to families experiencing job loss and economic strain need to be developed.

b) Safe and Secure Neighborhoods

Significant improvements are needed regarding sidewalk cutouts and audio signals at intersections to ensure safety and convenience for all pedestrians. Improvement is needed of

poor street designs and standards especially in hilly areas to allow ease of entry and exit for residents and emergency services personnel and vehicles. Problems need to be addressed including unstable cuts and fills due to grading, erosion contributing to landslides, storm water drainage, sewage disposal, water supply, and disposition of unusable land. Well-designed streets are at the heart of sustainable communities.

Crime reduction strategies and police-community partnerships need to be a priority in reducing criminal activity in our community. We need to ensure that the community offers social services and other forms of help, such as behavioral intervention programs, to provide alternatives to violent or criminal lifestyles. In addition, having been a member of a household with many Law Enforcement Officers and having direct law enforcement training in the military, it is imperative that the officers be provided training on how to deal with people or suspected criminals suffering from mental health illness.

c) Supporting Local Businesses and Schools

There is a need to foster economic empowerment initiatives that support our local merchants and retail corridors. These initiatives should promote entrepreneurship by providing technical assistance, financial aid and internships for our young adults that will be the next generation of Oakland business owners. We need our schools and to be able to retain qualified teachers to teach and inspire our young people to be creative, proactive, and innovative and fuel that entrepreneurial spirit through learning and developing skillsets.

d) Keeping Oakland Green

I am an advocate for preserving and conserving parks and playgrounds because as a community, we can engage in cleaner and more sustainable habits in order to protect the environment in which we live, work and play. I am open to developing solutions to address challenges associated with Oakland becoming a city that uses energy efficiently.

2. What is the biggest opportunity for your district or city during the next four years?

Our biggest opportunity during the next four years is to eradicate homelessness and to create better affordable housing solutions. Based on my almost daily conversations and interactions with homeless people, Oakland's homeless population will continue to grow if we don't create affordable housing which is essential to ending homelessness coupled with critically examining and improving health services, better employment and educational opportunities, and promoting strategies for social inclusion. We must also develop a homelessness prevention program that addresses the structural causes of homelessness. It is beneficial to examine other cities and countries to determine what they have done to end or reduce homelessness and determine if those models can be adopted in Oakland.

3. Describe your commitment to your district or city leading up to your bid for office.

Growing up in a household with family members working in public service helped me to understand and embrace the value and reward of serving the public. This led to me working

extensively with people of all walks of life and dedicating my life to public service. I am a natural leader and have a proven track record in leading people. I have been the Senior Pastor of Greater St. Paul Church for the past 24 years serving people in Oakland and the entire Bay Area providing hands-on community support. This includes helping people find housing solutions and feeding and clothing homeless people and others less fortunate. I have also worked with our mayor and other politicians, faith leaders, business leaders and community leaders/organizations to build consensus around issues of concern to the community and community services.

I am an Entrepreneur and the founding CEO of SPEEDCO (St. Paul Economic Empowerment Development Corporation) which is a community-based organization that offers service programs and vital resources for children, youth and families, focusing on fostering economic growth, civic engagement, mentorship, job training and educational guidance. I believe strongly in guiding and shaping the lives of our youth and have developed and implemented programs such as our College Scholarship Awards, Back-to-School Backpacks with school supplies for children and Coats for Kids. I am an advocate for small businesses in District 4 because they help the community and economy and empower our youth to succeed in the future workforce.

I worked for the Xerox Corporation in Sales and Marketing where I developed and managed budgets, developed and implemented sales and marketing strategies and formed lasting business relationships with managers in Fortune 500 companies.

I have a Doctorate degree, several Masters' and Bachelors' degrees (in areas of Divinity/Theology, Political Science, Law, Business, and Public Administration) and gained political work expertise and experience working on President Bill Clinton's Campaign.

I am committed to stand and fight for the continued growth of our city and will continue to remain steadfast in keeping District 4 and all neighborhoods at the center of the conversation. My public service culture and background, education and political experience, leadership skills, strong work ethic, consistent pursuit of excellence, and track record on community engagement and inclusion are the drivers for my bid for office. I would like to continue expanding my life's work in public service and "heart" work for the people in my community.

4. Silicon Valley and the Bay Area are at the center of global, technological advancement. How do you see technology's role in changing the lives of both longtime residents and transplants?

The increased migration of people that live, work and play in Oakland is causing a significant level of high resource demand on City services and congestion that impacts the quality of life of our residents. Residents have become accustomed to and expect their needs to be met quickly and efficiently where they can utilize technology to make purchases or pay bills with the touch of a button. Oakland has not implemented systems that encompass these types of quick and

efficient technical functions and oftentimes residents find themselves needing to download forms that have to be printed and mailed, requirements of cash or check payments only, appointments that have to be conducted in person, or limited office hours. These experiences conflict with what residents have been trained to expect when conducting business outside of local government. This is a clear indication that Oakland needs to embrace technology to make conducting business for city services easier with less friction for residents.

We need a smarter systemic approach to transform our city to meet the demands of residents and transplants receiving city services. The digital revolution and advances in technology can help us address that approach because it can facilitate the building of smarter, better connected and more livable communities through seamless connected systems. We should be able to leverage real-time information and communications to improve the lives of residents by balancing social, economic, and environmental resources resulting in a smart and sustainable city. I would fully support Oakland developing and implementing smart city blueprints that will connect District 4 with other districts to better serve the residents as well as other cities in the Bay Area. A smart city will allow Oakland to be more customer-focused, increase civic engagement, and improve the lives of our residents. Utilizing smart technology and a communications strategy, is the key to encouraging stronger collaboration between city governments, businesses, schools and residents to meet and solve challenges resulting from societal changes and mounting pressures on resources.