

**Forest Park Civic Association
Questionnaire
Ward 3 - City Council Candidates**

These questions were sent by the FPCA to the Ward 3 candidates, Melvin Edwards and Martin Loughman. The answers were not edited, but are presented here as written and returned to us. The FPCA generated this questionnaire, so that Forest Park Voters can go to the polls knowing how the candidates stand on issues that are important to our neighborhood.

Q1. What do you see as the role of the city councilor in the strong mayor form of government that we have in Springfield?

Answers:

Melvin Edwards:

The basic function of a councilor is to approve or to cut the budget, to approve or deny special permits, and to legislate city ordinance. Beyond these basic functions we are a conduit between the citizens and City Hall.

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Q2. Have you read the Urban Land Institute report on Springfield? In your opinion, which of its recommendations should be priorities in the Forest Park Neighborhood? What can the City Council do to move these recommendations forward? What will you do to move these recommendations forward?

Answers:

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Melvin Edwards:

Yes I have read the Urban Land Institute report. I will support the creation of a Homestead Program, strengthen enforcement of existing codes, engage civic and neighborhood associations, reclaim tax delinquent and abandoned properties, and apply CDBG & HOME funds strategically. I will address neighborhood concerns, lobby other councilors to build effective coalitions, and expand their knowledge and familiarity of the ULI report.

Q3. The City Council recently failed to vote on passage of the proposed new zoning ordinance for the City of Springfield, wasting thousands of dollars of taxpayer money and city employee time. It took months of work with input from a diverse group of Springfield residents and interests to come up with the revised zoning ordinance. To have it discarded so quickly and casually is an insult to the people who worked on it and a disservice to Springfield residents and businesses who need it. What is your position on the proposed new zoning ordinance? If you support it, what will you do to insure its passage? If you do not support it, please give your reasons.

Answers:

Melvin Edwards:

I support it. I will help to demystify it and explain its benefits to both businesses and residents of Springfield.

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

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Q4. The City Council presently issues Special Permits and attaches restrictions to the special permits including the hours of allowed operation., number of cars allowed for auto oriented businesses, parking restrictions, etc. Once a special permit is passed by the City Council, the zoning administrator of the city has the responsibility of insuring compliance. While they actively respond to complaints from the neighborhoods, their limited resources mean that the bulk of the responsibility of reporting noncompliance falls on the neighborhoods. What can be done to shift the burden of responsibility to the City? What will you do to insure that there is strong enforcement of the special permits?

Answers:

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Melvin Edwards:

Create a database of special permits with required periodic review. Require a semi-annual report be provided to the City Council and published on the city's web site for public access.

Q5. Presently, the Planning Department requires petitioners for a zone change, special permits, or variances, to present their plan to the neighborhood council/civic associations prior to the issue being taken up by the City Council. Frequently, the City Council either ignores the suggestions made by the neighborhood or works with the petitioner directly to come up with a compromise without input from the neighborhood. What method of mutual cooperation, that includes the petitioner and the neighborhood will you work to implement?

Answers:

Melvin Edwards:

The new zoning ordinances spell out a review process for special permits. It is important to welcome neighborhood involvement. I will work to ensure that all interested parties are notified and invited to participate in the process.

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Q6. Bright Nights is a longstanding event which has brought success for the city and is a challenge to the neighborhood. The event continues to inconvenience users of the park. Displays are put up in September, and often not removed until March, turning the park into a fair ground. What can be done to minimize the effects of Bright Nights on the park? What will you do to make this happen?

Answers:

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Melvin Edwards:

While I support the Spirit of Springfield and applaud their efforts, I appreciate the concerns as stated. We always need to aware that Forest Park is a Fredrick Law Olmstead designed park. It is a valuable asset for the entire city. I will encourage the Spirit of Springfield to be more timely with the instalation and removal of the displays (weather permitting). I will ask that the SOS ensure good traffic control during the event.

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Q7. Recently, two incidents occurred in Forest Park that have raised the issue of safety. There was a shooting at the basketball court, only a short distance away from where 8-10 year old girls were having soccer practice and a young child was attacked and had a cell phone violently stolen from them. To make the park safer, the Parks Dept. discussed having a "pass system " for the basketball area, but nothing came of it . For a while, there was a police cruiser present between 4-6 pm , but that has stopped. We understand that a full time police presence is too costly, but something needs to be done. There has been longstanding cooperation between the Parks Department and the Forest Park Civic Association and neighborhood residents, but this issue has not been solved. What should be done to help make Forest Park safer and what will you do to make this happen?

Answers:

Melvin Edwards:

Unfortunately the issue as stated is an urban problem prevalent across the nation. At a recent meeting of the Maple High Six Corners Neighborhood Council, Commissioner Fitchet spoke about the need for the residents of Springfield to be more vigilant and what the police department is doing to address the urban crime issues. I intend to work with the Police Department to create innovative strategies such as increased bike patrols and more community engagement.

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Q8. The library branches across the city are only open on a part time basis, which means that children have use of the library's resources only some of the time. Residents who depend on the library branches to get on the internet have limited access. What steps will you take as a city councilor to increase hours at the branch libraries?

Answers:

Martin Loughman:

Did Not respond.

Melvin Edwards:

Given the monetary restrictions which is limiting hours, the library administration should work with the School Department to coordinate hours that are more conducive to student access.

Q9. What steps would you take to help revitalize the X-Main Street Corporation and make the 'X' a more pedestrian friendly neighborhood shopping area?

Answers:

Melvin Edwards:

I applaud the X Main St. Corporation for the tremendous work they did on the Bing Arts Center. There are many complex intersections in the city, such as the X, Six Corners, and Main and Locust Street. I will work with the Traffic Department to improve pedestrian safety.

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

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Q10. There have been a number of break-ins in the Forest Park area of both homes and automobiles and there is some concern about police response. Education of residents on good crime prevention techniques has been extremely limited, and the community police aspect of policing appears to have dropped off significantly. Yes, there are still beat management team meetings on a monthly basis, but the beat cop, is less present and communication between the police and residents has decreased. What will you do as a City Councilor to change this for the better?

Answers:

Martin Loughman:

Did not respond.

Melvin Edwards:

I will continue to support the Springfield Police Department and their efforts to find creative ways to engage the public. I am an advocate of community policing. I would strongly suggest increased civic engagement. I am a firm believer that we are our neighbors keeper. Support of neighborhood watches and participation in the citizen councils, and neighborhood associations are the key to more secure neighborhoods.