



BBGJ Steering Committee Questions for Mayoral Candidate Forum 2/24/2020

1. Tonight's forum was pulled together by a broad coalition of environmental groups, community leaders and faith-based organizations. This group represents a broad cross section of Baltimore's residents who care about and prioritize environmental and public health, and who want their elected leaders to understand that clean air and water and plentiful green spaces make our neighborhoods safer, cleaner, and more desirable places to live, work and play. **Given this background, please share with the audience tonight what your administration's priority will be when it comes to addressing air & water pollution, tree canopy, park maintenance, and climate resilience?**
2. Baltimore's painful history of racism and segregation led to stark disparities among neighborhoods regarding tree canopy, air quality, summer temperatures, public health, and sewer backups. City efforts have had little positive impact on these longstanding inequities. **What will your administration do to direct resources more equitably to improve the lives of residents in our most challenged neighborhoods?**
3. Many cities and counties across the country are innovatively addressing environmental and public health challenges by the use of green stormwater infrastructure, citywide waste reduction and composting, offering free transit to all residents, or committing to large-scale tree planting to combat the effects of climate change. **What innovative environmental or public health best practices would your administration implement in Baltimore?**
4. Baltimore has some of the most unhealthy air in the country. The Baltimore Clean Air Act of 2019 forces two of the City's largest polluters - the trash and medical-waste incinerators - to meet significantly higher pollution standards or to close down by 2022. **What steps will your administration take to better manage waste and increase composting and recycling in Baltimore if these facilities close?**

5. Baltimore has developed and adopted innovative strategies and comprehensive plans for greening, sustainability, and climate resilience (2018 Green Network Plan, 2019 Sustainability Plan and 2012 Climate Action Plan). Robust progress has been stymied by agency resistance to change and lack of genuine collaboration among agencies and potential non-profit partners. This “business-as-usual culture” misses opportunities for long-term improvements to neighborhood and environmental health, and ignores resident input. Nearby cities like Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. have demonstrated how innovation and collaboration, when prioritized by city leaders, can improve outcomes and leverage additional resources. **There are those in the environmental community who are concerned that there is current very little inter-agency cooperation, and that new initiatives are met with resistance. How would you respond?**

6. Trees play a vital role in City neighborhoods, using carbon, removing air pollution, providing oxygen, reducing summer temperatures, and soaking up storm water. More than 50 years of scientific study demonstrate that robust urban tree canopy reduces stress, crime and violence, and improves mental and physical health, property values, and spending in shopping centers. Baltimore City has modestly increased its tree canopy by 1% over the past 10 years. But to achieve the city’s goal of doubling our tree canopy by 2030, we must significantly increase tree planting by as many as 30,000 trees annually and reduce tree loss. **What is your plan for increasing the City's tree canopy and, equally important, protecting and maintaining our existing trees?**

7. Since 2013, Baltimore City has collected Stormwater Utility Fees from all property owners to pay for projects to reduce pollution and flooding caused by stormwater. To date, large portions of this revenue has been used instead for General-Funded operations such as street sweeping and inlet cleaning. Many in the environmental community have called for this dedicated revenue to be used to implement green stormwater practices like rain gardens and pavement removal to reduce flooding and pollution. **How will your administration use this dedicated revenue to provide maximum long-term benefits for residents and neighborhoods?**

8. As the pace of climate change accelerates, local temperatures will keep rising and severe weather and catastrophic flooding will increase. Reducing, and ultimately eliminating, carbon dioxide emissions is essential for reversing these dangerous trends. The Baltimore Climate Action Plan recommends 4 broad strategies for reducing emissions: a) reduce energy use in existing buildings, b) promote renewable energy, c) upgrade energy performance for renovations and new construction, and d) promote efficient community energy districts. **Which of these strategies do you see as most important and achievable in Baltimore?**

9. Of course, no city or county alone can reverse the current climate crisis. **How will you work with the State and surrounding counties to aggressively implement the Climate Action Plan's strategies?**

10. With increasing demolition of vacant houses across the city, there is an urgent need for vacant-lot clean up, greening, and maintenance especially in our most challenged neighborhoods. Responsibility for management and maintenance of vacant and undeveloped property is spread across City agencies, often resulting in agency turf battles, lengthy complaint response times, and inefficient use of city resources. **What will your administration do to improve this fragmented system of land management and maintenance?**

11. Tree planting and maintenance, green stormwater implementation, park maintenance and improvement, invasive plant removal and forest management, and similar long-term maintenance needs could provide opportunities for city residents who need secure jobs. Unfortunately, City contracts for these services often go to contractors outside the city. **How would your administration prioritize and scale-up placement of city residents into green jobs?**

12. Many city residents have encountered city agencies and programs working at cross purposes. To make our city cleaner, greener and more equitable, we need leaders that prioritize innovative collaboration, and elimination of obstacles in city protocols. **Describe your willingness to create a Deputy Mayor for Sustainability to integrate green infrastructure and coordinate agency and external resources.**

13. A tree ordinance is a legal tool to protect and manage community trees by regulating tree planting, removal, and maintenance on public and private property. By protecting trees, a well-implemented ordinance can enhance a community's beauty, reduce air pollution, lower air-conditioning costs, and increase biodiversity. **What is your position on creation of a Baltimore City Tree Ordinance to protect trees on both private and public property?**

14. Vibrant, well-maintained parks are cornerstones of every great city. Baltimore's Department of Recreation and Parks has responsibility for improving and maintaining over 5,000 acres of parkland and achieving the City's adopted goal of 40% tree canopy. In recent decades, Baltimore has consistently ranked in the lowest quartile of cities when it comes to park funding per capita. Given the City's current budget outlook, it seems unlikely to increase the Department's funding for park enhancements and tree plantings with City dollars alone. **What is your plan to leverage public resources with private partnerships to improve the city's under-funded park system?**

15. Infrastructure projects such as water & sewer and other utilities require changes to the landscape. They should also require extensive resident engagement, so conflicts can be avoided and communities can weigh in on proposals. Recent DPW projects in places like Lake Ashburton and Chinguapin Run have fallen short by destroying hundreds of mature trees and damaging streams, while disregarding residents' concerns. **What will your administration do to treat stakeholders as partners throughout the lifecycle of such projects?**
16. Inequitable access to transit limits job opportunities for many Baltimore residents. At the same time, emissions from personal cars and trucks-- the source of most vehicle miles in our region--pollute Baltimore's air and threaten public health. We can address both of these issues by focusing resources on regional approaches to reliable mass transit and alternatives that make walking and biking safer. **How will your administration work with the State to improve Baltimore's transit network and connectivity and promote equity, job opportunity, and the environment?**
17. Many of Baltimore's forest patches and green spaces exist outside parks. Communities often care for these areas which provide recreation, gathering spaces, community gardens, and other local benefits. **How will your administration ensure that such parcels remain in community hands and resist development pressures?**

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE ASKED BY THE MODERATORS

1. **Do you support a zero-waste plan for Baltimore? Why, why not? And, if so, what would you do to put that in place?**