

Mayor and/or City Council 2021

Response ID:68 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Hillary Thomas

2. Candidate for Ward # (if applicable)

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3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 6032 W 50th St

City/State/Zip : Mission/KS/66202

4. Phone Number

9139614520

5. Email Address

hillaryformission@gmail.com

6. Campaign Website

<https://www.facebook.com/hillaryformission>

2. Candidate Background

7. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

Executive Director, Daniel Keating Foundation: 2021 - Present

Development Director, The Mission Project: 2020 - 2021

Development Director, The Don Bosco Centers: 2017 - 2020

8. If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held.

NA

9. Other recent political/community experience (50 words or less)

Current City Councilmember, City of Mission

Current Council Vice Present

Past Chair of Community Development Committee and Vice-Chair of Finance and Administration Committee

Former member of Mission's Capital Improvement Program Committee

Director on the SMN Patron's Gallery Board

Policy Committee Chair of Climate Action KC

3. Issues and Policy

10. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (100 words or less)

- Infrastructure and park investments

- Sustainable economic development

- Quality, affordable housing

11. What are your views on the services and value the City's citizens receive for their local tax dollars? (100 words or less)

Mission residents receive a favorable return on their tax dollars but there are areas for improvement. For example, we have historically under-invested in our outdoor parks, stormwater, and street programs causing significant deferred maintenance. Now, the city is making up for lost time as it attempts to be more proactive in its investments.

12. What changes, if any, would you like to see to the City budget? (100 words or less)

The City thoughtfully holds 25% of its General Fund in reserves, providing approximately two months of operating funds. But for the past several years, the reserve fund has grown beyond the 25% benchmark. Although these excess funds were helpful in alleviating the revenue shortfalls caused by Covid-19, I believe the city should use the remaining excess of the 25% balance (around \$1.2 million) to provide increased services to residents in the form of park, stormwater, and/or street improvements.

Additionally, I want to see the anticipated \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan dollars utilized for infrastructure projects.

13. What role, if any, do you believe the City should play in economic development to bring jobs and capital investment to the community? (100 words or less)

Cities are critical in creating a favorable economic environment for businesses and they should partner with economic boards and chambers to ensure goals and investments align. Mission and its business partners should form an Economic Development Commission that would guide and support local public-private partnerships.

Of course, economic development tools like incentives are common for stimulating development but must be used on a case-by-case basis and in concert with the goals of the city. In my tenure, I have voted for one development agreement with incentives because it required the developer to meet LEED-silver certification and affordable housing requirements.

14. As the City considers future development and redevelopment projects, describe your views on how the City should best manage and balance growth? (100 words or less)

Mission is an almost completely developed, 2.5 square mile city. To grow, we must build up or redevelop. This places extraordinary pressure on city planning and we prepare for the capital investments needed to meet the potential growth. The City is currently involved in its comprehensive planning process which at its completion, will act as a guide for land-use development and redevelopment for the next twenty years. Although change is never easy, we must be willing to evolve and reconsider land-use, zoning, and sustainability in new ways.

15. What is your philosophy on the role the City should play in terms of metro-area issues? (100 words or less)

One of the coolest parts of being in a metro with so many small surrounding cities is watching the snowball effect when there's a good idea. We saw this with the Non-Discrimination Ordinance for the LGBTQIA+ community. We should be inspired by innovative ideas from neighboring communities but not lose track of the importance of focusing on our individual constituents' needs.

I appreciate the work of Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) and other organizations who are working to prioritize interconnectedness and regionalism. Especially as we consider climate change and watershed impacts, we must collaborate to accomplish anything substantial.

16. What do you believe the takeaways for the City should be, if any, from the COVID-19 pandemic experience? (100 words or less)

Be prepared to change and then change again.

17. What do you believe are the greatest challenges the City faces over the next ten years and how would you address them? (100 words or less)

Staying competitive with neighboring cities

Solution: Being bold! We must think outside the box and capitalize on the uniqueness that is Mission.

Failing infrastructure

Solution: Large scale investments in stormwater and streets; capitalizing on ARP funds; strong relationships with our regional, state, and federal partners.

18. Why are you seeking this public office? (100 words or less)

I love serving and there is more work to do!

19. What do you believe makes you uniquely qualified to serve in this position and most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (100 words or less)

I don't have an opponent but even if I did my approach is the same: I am accessible, knowledgeable, and committed. Please reach out anytime!
