



DeKalb County Democratic Committee
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2021 Municipal Elections Candidate Questionnaire (Responses) N^o: 2

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Name	Katie Bell
Municipality	Decatur
Position for which you are running	City Commission
District and seat (if applicable) for which you are running. If not applicable, please type "N/A."	District 1
Do you support your municipality's Nondiscrimination Ordinance (NDO)? Or, if your city does not have one, do you support passing an NDO? Please explain.	100% support the NDO in Decatur, and am very happy with the updates completed earlier this year that required vendors to also have NDO's.
Do you believe armed police officers should be dispatched to mental health calls? Please explain.	I am a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and my husband is a licensed social worker (LMSW) and we know how important it is to have a trained mental health professional on the scene of a mental health crisis. I think it is abhorrent that the mentally ill in Georgia end up in jail instead of getting the help they need and deserve. The police are not trained in navigating this sphere and that is why all police departments should have mental health professionals on staff. I also believe that all police officers should have mandatory crisis intervention training (CIT) which is an evidenced based training on de-escalation.
Do you believe citizens should be arrested for possessing small amounts of marijuana? How is your view similar or different from the current policy in your municipality? Please explain.	I support the decriminalization of marijuana and believe Decatur has failed to act on this progressive agenda item. Progressive leaders like Ted Terry has led the way in this regard in DeKalb County, and I support him and others in this effort.
The pandemic has presented unique challenges to cities in many different areas. What is your position on masking and vaccine mandates?	I 100% support mask and vaccine mandates.
Please explain how you would address the current housing crisis at the municipal level. How would you help people who are homeless/unhoused in your city?	In DeKalb County if you are experiencing homelessness you are required to call DeKalb Coordinated Entry. I have worked closely with them as well as the Gateway Center on helping individuals experiencing homelessness. However, as I noted earlier, it is imperative these individuals have a social worker help them through the process. The City of Decatur could be doing a lot more to help people than they are doing and I support them hiring a full-time social worker.
What would you change about how development is being approached in your municipality? What is your position on affordable housing and making homeownership more accessible?	It is imperative that as a city we focus on affordable housing and workforce housing. Decatur recently approved a development that has \$3000 dollar monthly rents. This is fundamentally unacceptable. It is our jobs to make Decatur accessible to all not just those who can afford \$3000 rents. I also support the senior tax exemption in Decatur because our seniors should be able to stay where they live on fixed income.

Do you consider the way your city government operates to be transparent, accountable, and effective? What would you change?

All governments must do a better job in this regard and I pledge to do everything I can to assure a new level of transparency in Decatur. I also promise to communicate effectively with the community so to increase engagement so that the community can hold us accountable. The first meeting I ever attended, we the people successfully stopped a spot zone of heavy commerce to approve a storage unit. That parcel is not humanely, a shared office for mental health professionals. Ultimately, if a government is transparent and being held accountable, that is the best way to assure they are effective.

Please give an assessment of your municipality's current infrastructure needs (roads, sidewalks, etc.). What would you change or do differently?

It is important that the city commission focus on fixing more potholes and sidewalks as it is the foundation of what local government should be taking care to monitor. If a locality cannot do this, it is hard to believe they can effectively do anything.

Are you satisfied with the number, quality and management of trails, parks and green space in your municipality? If not, what would you change?

I am always for more connectivity of trails and parks. Decatur needs to do more for conservation and planting trees in greenspaces. I fully support a new tree ordinance that has a tree canopy goal of 70%. If we are going to take on climate change, we need to set our goals high and work to achieve them anyway we can.

Please list, in order, your top 3 priorities or things you would like to accomplish, should you be elected or re-elected.

Restoring equity, diversity, and inclusion are my top priorities. Communities function better when people of diverse perspectives, skills, cultures, and histories come together. Decatur was successful in large part because, 30 years ago, such a group came together and developed a shared vision based upon a desire for a strong educational system and good quality of life. In the last decade, more people have moved into our city to enroll their children in our schools, and now, we are in danger of losing the unique voices and perspectives as older residents and lower to middle income and communities of color are pushed out. For me, diversity is about a mindset that you maintain. It means having a meaningful conversation with someone who has a different worldview; someone who is of a different culture, race, political affiliation, and/or moral belief system. It covers income differences. Backgrounds. Sexual orientation. Gender identity and much more. We need all these perspectives to make a strong city, and valuing every aspect of an individual's unique identity is a non-negotiable for me. Our city used to be a bastion of LGBTQ homeowners. Since 2010, we've lost 74% of same-sex homeowners. In 1990, Decatur was 50/50 Black and white residents. In 2020, the city population decreased to only 20% Black residents. Now, we have some classrooms where there is only one child of color in a kindergarten class. Incomes have changed drastically too. Almost half (46%) of Decatur residents earn over \$100,000. Black residents' income has only increased 12% while the rest of the city has seen a 31% increase. We must recognize this is a huge problem and be committed to solving it -- together. Focusing on affordable housing, while leading with equity and thoughtful sustainable growth that considers everyone, is our best way forward.