

THE CHRONICLE

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Volume 46, Number 20

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

THURSDAY, February 6, 2020

East Ward candidates tackle crucial issues, discuss East End Master Plan

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Last weekend candidates vying to represent the residents of the East Ward came together to discuss some of the most pressing issues including gentrification, the lack of jobs and affordable housing, the future of Union Station, and the East End Master Plan, just to name a few.

With four candidates on the ballot and another running as a write-in candidate, the battle for the East Ward is arguably the most intriguing race this election season. Candidates include incumbent Annette Scippio, George Redd, Kismet Loftin-Bell, Phillip Carter, and Michael Banner, who is the write-in candidate.

Candidates speak out
Scippio has represented the East Ward since late 2018 when she was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Derwin Montgomery, who went on to serve in the N.C. House of Representatives. When discussing her platform, Scippio said she is the best person for the job because she has the most experience working with the people. Before joining City

development in the East Ward. He said some parts have grown while others have lagged behind.

"Growing up right here in this community, I've seen a lot of change, but not enough. That's why I'm running today," Redd said. "Parts of the East Ward have grown and thrived while others parts have remained the same."

Kismet Loftin-Bell, a professor at Forsyth Tech and community advocate who has served on several boards since moving to Winston-Salem 13 years ago, said she knows what it's like to deal with some of the issues that residents of East Winston have to live with on a daily basis. She said, "I understand what it feels like to be unemployed and underemployed, to have folks question my abilities and skills. I understand how it feels to be undermined. I also know how it feels to be violated and have my home and cars broken into and have drug transactions right outside my front door. And wake up to gunshots, worrying because my next door neighbor had a bullet go through her home. That's why I'm running for City Council



Last weekend candidates running to represent the East Ward on the Winston-Salem City Council came together for a forum at the Delta Fine Arts Center.

Photos by Tevin Stinson

is known throughout the community for his work as an activist and community farmer, is running as an Independent write-in candidate and will face off against the winner of the primary election in the General Election in November.

you look at our community, you see a community that is highly harassed by the police. We're overcharged for rent in spaces that are not decent," Banner continued. "When it was very clear that it was red lining, it was policy. It's not physical slavery but mental slavery that's inflicted upon our people, that keeps us in a stagnant poverty state-of-mind. We have to be intentional in demanding equality for our people.

East End Master Plan
One of the biggest issues discussed during the forum was the future of the neighborhoods west of U.S. Highway 52 and along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive known as the East End. Despite receiving mixed reviews from the community, in 2018 members of City Council approved the develop-

Ayers Saint Gross, is expected to serve as a guide for future investors in the East Ward. Loftin-Bell reminded those in attendance at the forum that there currently isn't any funding for the plan. She said before looking at the plan, it is important that we address other issues in the community first. Loftin-Bell also discussed the need to push more residents toward home ownership, support programs that help homeowners already in the community, and build relationships with private entities to invest in the area.

"One of the challenges we all have to face is that folks are leaving and not coming back into the East Ward. The way we change it is one house, one building, one piece of property at a time. He who controls the land controls what happens," Loftin-Bell said.

that is taking place so we can see the vision come to pass."

Carter didn't waste any time sharing his thoughts on the East End Master Plan. He said, "Let's call it what it really is, they call it an East End Master Plan, but it's gentrification." Carter said when city officials and S.G. Atkins CDC first announced plans to create a master plan, he asked that they reach out to residents and find out what they needed to do to be a part of the process and it never happened. Although there were several public meetings to get public input on the plan, Carter said more should've been done to reach out to residents who weren't able to make it to the meetings and their needs.

"They said they did, but they didn't," Carter said. "They didn't go out



East Ward candidate Phillip Carter makes a point during the Candidates Forum held on Saturday, Feb. 1 at the Delta Fine Arts Center.

Council, Scippio served as executive director of Leadership Winston-Salem.

"I am the most qualified candidate for this position because of my life experiences," Scippio said.

Redd currently serves as the director of program services for Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County. When sharing his reasons for running, Redd said he hasn't seen enough

for the East Ward," Loftin-Bell continued. "I'm committed to putting people over politics."

Longtime East Winston resident and community advocate Phillip Carter recently finished his second term as vice chair of the Forsyth County Democratic Party. Carter said his platform is centered around "keeping the people first." He said if elected, one of his points of emphasis will be making sure the East Ward receives its fair share of funding from the city.

"I believe as your next East Ward Councilperson, it is my job to see that the taxes are appropriate and create legislation to better the economy, the community and the citizens of the East Ward." Carter said.

Michael Banner, who

Banner said the lack of justice in the East Ward is what is holding the community back. If elected, Banner said he will work with his fellow City Councilmembers and other leaders to reduce poverty. He said he would push for investment in the community and entrepreneurship through farming, agriculture, and other programs to cut down on recidivism.

Banner also discussed the need to start testing water in communities where toxic gases are known to be contaminating the land; for example, the neighborhood near Bowman Gray Stadium.

"I would like to work with City Council and those in leadership positions to take some of the sting out of poverty in our community. When



Write-in East Ward candidate Michael Banner shares his thoughts on the East End Master plan during the Candidates Forum held last weekend.

ment plan designed to address community needs and make the East Winston neighborhood a "destination location."

The master plan, developed by designers with

"Also we have to change the narrative of what's happening. Oftentimes folks believe there is a high level of crime in the East Ward and that is a misnomer. So we have to shift the story

into the community to find out what was their income, who had disabilities, what was their education level. I don't want anybody to think I don't want inno-

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