



2023

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

VOTER GUIDE

WARD 4

MARCH 7TH, APRIL 4TH ELECTION DAY



Important Dates



Register to vote by 02/08



Request a mail in absentee ballot by 2/22



Vote absentee in person by 03/06

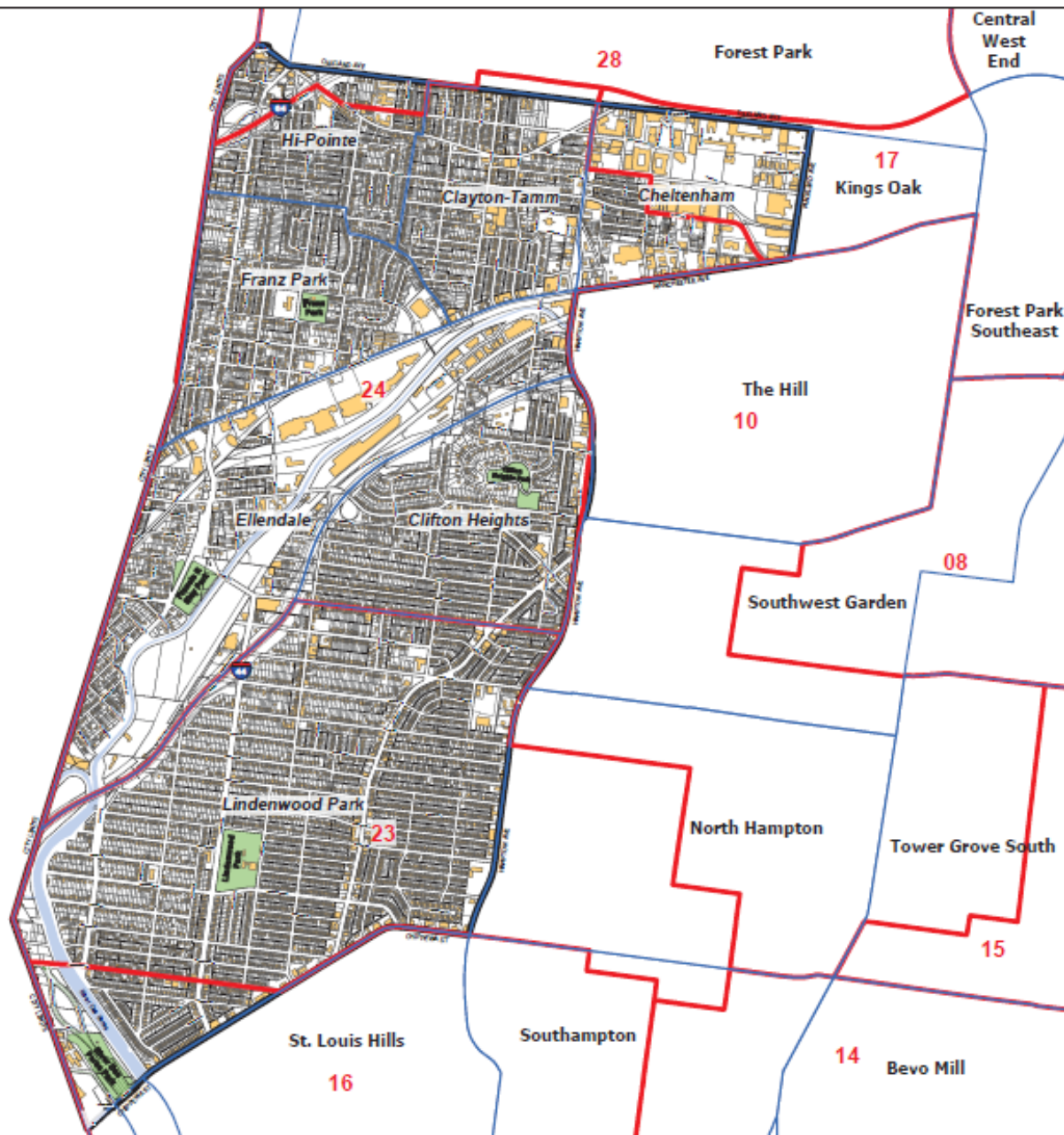


March 7th, April 4th ELECTION DAY

Role of the BOA

The Board of Aldermen is the legislative body of the City of St. Louis and creates, passes, and amends local laws, as well as approves the City's budget every year. There are now fourteen aldermen, after ward reduction, one from each ward in the City and a Board of Aldermen President.

**All candidates running for the Board of Alderman were sent these questions.
Answers are copied verbatim without any editing.**



Legend

- WARD 4 2021
- WARDS 2011
- NEIGHBORHOODS
- BLOCKS
- PARCELS
- BUILDING
- PARKS

WARD 4

Adopted on 12/27/2021

City of St. Louis - Planning & Urban Design Agency

CITY OF ST. LOUIS
PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN
 AGENCY

The preparation of this map was financed in part through a grant from the Department of Local Government Development and the Community Development Commission, under the direction of the Mayor, E. V. Brennan, Jr. (1997-2003).

Map Created and Edited by: [unreadable]
 with P&UD staff and GIS users.

Voting Locations

Polls open from 6am-7pm

YOU CAN VOTE AT ANY LOCATION.

Buder Library

4401 Hampton Ave

Central Library

1303 Olive St

Friendly Temple Missionary Church

5544 Dr. MLK Dr

Hamilton Elementary School

5819 West Minster Pl

Missouri School For The Blind

3867 Magnolia Ave

Nance Elementary School

8959 Riverview Blvd

Newstead M. B. Church

725 Bellerive Blvd

Our Lady of Sorrows Church

5020 Rhodes Ave

Salvation Army Temple Corps

2740 Arsenal St

Schlafly Library

225 N. Euclid Ave

Woodward Elementary School

725 Bellerive Blvd

Voter ID Requirements

Show one of the forms of acceptable identification and sign the poll book to obtain your ballot:

- A nonexpired Missouri driver or non-driver license;
- A nonexpired military ID, including a veteran's ID card;
- A nonexpired United States passport; or
- Another photo ID issued by the United States or the state of Missouri which is either not expired or expired after the date of the most recent general election.

Ward 4 Candidates



Bret Narayan



Casey Otto



Joe Vaccaro

Question 1

Please provide a 250-word introduction explaining why you feel that voters in your ward should elect you as their representation to the Board of Aldermen.

Alder Bret Narayan

I believe that the residents of the 4th ward should re-elect me as Alderman due to my work within the community and my work for the City as a whole. In addition to emboldening our local neighborhood associations and community groups on issues like zoning and conditional use permits, I have also worked with many local businesses to guide them through the uncertainty of COVID-19 restrictions and funding, all while managing to sponsor and pass legislation that helped everyone who lives, works, and plays in the City by improving our air quality, the way that we deal with asbestos remediation, and updating our previously antiquated marijuana laws.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 2

What do you believe to be the most important role(s) of an Alderperson?

Alder Bret Narayan

I believe that the most important role of an Alderperson is to be the voice of their community within City Hall. Whether that be helping an individual who is struggling with a specific issue or amplifying the voices that we hear at community meetings and ward meetings regarding any specific piece of legislation, the role of any elected official is to serve the people that they represent, both through direct action as well as representation.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 3

What is your plan for maximizing community participation around legislative processes in order to make things more accessible and transparent in St. Louis?

Alder Bret Narayan

I have maximized community input into legislation by bringing the most contentious pieces of legislation, zoning, and permitting to neighborhood organizations for input.

This ensures that people of various backgrounds, politically and socio-economically, have an ability to make their voices heard on many different issues. I then take the information that I have gathered through community input to make decisions that I believe are best in line with the desires of the people I represent.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 4

TIF: Although TIFs and other sorts of tax incentives and credits are intended to be used to spur development in blighted areas, in St. Louis they are overwhelmingly used in wealthier areas. What should be done differently (please be specific)?

Alder Bret Narayan

Incentives have long been over-utilized both in use and in amounts throughout the richest parts of the region. As alderman of the 24th ward I have been very cautious about not only what incentives I may put forward, but also about what incentives I support, because every dollar that our City hands to developers is a dollar that we're taking from our St. Louis Public Schools. While some incentives actually immediately contribute to our tax base, we need to make sure that any project we incentivize makes economic sense in terms of jobs and taxes, and that we're not simply engaging in a makeshift welfare program for developers at the expense of school children and city services.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 5

What role do you believe that Alderpersons should play in education in the City of St. Louis?

Alder Bret Narayan

I think the most important role for alderpersons in the City of St. Louis regarding education is to ensure that they are not engaging in short sighted development policy that robs our public schools of valuable tax dollars in order to hand those dollars to developers. While some incentives make sense and immediately bring money into our tax coffers and our public schools, many do not.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 6

How would you more effectively address intra community violence and harm in the city of St. Louis, and more specifically in your ward?

Alder Bret Narayan

There is no silver bullet to solve the issue of violence in this region. We need to look holistically at the issue if we are ever going to come up with solutions. This would include ensuring that our public schools are adequately funded by not engaging in short sighted development, continuing to fund community centers and investing in our youth, looking at environmental factors, such as lead poisoning, which can lead people to engage in violence, and look at rehabilitative criminal justice to deter crime while also seeking to avoid sending someone down a path of criminality from which they have trouble escaping.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 7

One of the first bills proposed in this upcoming State legislative session included returning local control of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department back to the state of Missouri. What is your stance on local control and pre-emptive attacks on local policy?

Alder Bret Narayan

I am a proponent of local control, however, this is an issue that our local government doesn't have a lot of control on. Should Jefferson City see fit to return control of the police department back to the State, we need to be prepared to discuss this with both our St. Louis state representatives, as well as to explain our thoughts to suburban and rural state representatives.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 8

In what ways should the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department be more accountable to the residents of this city? How would you ensure that SLMPD achieves those standards of accountability?

Alder Bret Narayan

As alderman of the 24th, I worked with Ald. Clark-Hubbard as the first co-sponsor to create a more powerful civilian oversight board to ensure that we were continuing to build trust between the community and our police department. This involved repeated discussions with our local Police Department, the Police Officer's Association, the Ethical Society of Police, and the Circuit Attorney's office. While no bill is perfect, many involved believed that this was a solid framework to help build trust and accountability.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 9

With the passage of BB 116, we will see the beginnings of a Universal Basic Income program for residents of the city. The current program outlines that you have to be a city resident, have a child(ren) under the age of 18 enrolled in the public school district, and not exceed 170% of the Federal Poverty Level. How do you feel about this Universal Basic Income? If you support UBI, how would you seek to expand this program to include those that don't fall under these current requirements? (I.E. Homeless, those city residents who chose to enroll students into city charter schools, etc.)

Alder Bret Narayan

Although I think the concept of UBI is fascinating, I believe that it is not really possible to run more than a small pilot program when dealing with UBI at the local level. In order for any UBI to be successful in the long run it would have to be sustainable and truly universal, which the local program is not.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 10

What concrete steps will you take to alleviate homelessness in the City of St. Louis?

Alder Bret Narayan

I was a sponsor of the tiny house program for veterans while on the Board of Aldermen. I believe that this is a great model as it uses housing first, and then puts people near where resources are. I believe programs like this should be expanded, as these tiny homes are modular and mobile. Additionally, using a housing first model ensures that people are off the streets while they are receiving the services they need in order to get themselves back on their feet.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 11

How do you plan to fund needed infrastructure improvements in the city, particularly in areas impacted by flooding?

Alder Bret Narayan

As alderman I have worked with the Metropolitan Sewer District, the City Emergency Management Agency, the State Emergency Management Agency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to address flooding in areas of my ward. However, I believe that the vast majority of this work needs to be taking place at the State and Federal levels. As we get more development in floodplains to the north of us, the water that would typically settle in those floodplains is displaced into our City and regions south of us. I have requested that Congresswoman Bush discuss the difficulties our region faces, particularly with flooding along the River Des Peres, with the Army Corps of Engineers so they may address the issue both with the funding and the authority of the Federal Government.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 12

What are some of your biggest priorities for ARPA spending?

Alder Bret Narayan

I believe that when we have a pool of money like ARPA, we need to be out in the community hearing about what the people would like that money invested in. If it were solely up to me, I would be investing in social programming, particularly for our region's youth, and better mass transit for all in our region.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 13

One of the greatest factors around increasing economic mobility in the region is through increasing public transit access. How do you plan to make public transit more accessible across the city?

Alder Bret Narayan

I have been an advocate for Metro moving to a fare free system like we have seen in some similarly situated cities. This would both decrease the financial burden of commuting too and from work for many of our region's workers as well as encourage others to utilize mass transit. The more people utilizing mass transit, the easier it is to encourage investment in those systems.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 14

Issues of environmental racism affect many families in St Louis. How do you plan to address issues such as lead poisoning, food apartheid, illegal dumping, and air quality that leads to higher rates of asthma?

Alder Bret Narayan

I am the lead sponsor of a bill to address lead in our region at the moment. In the past, I was the lead sponsor of a bill to address our city's air quality and asbestos remediation. As an asthmatic myself, issues involving air quality are of great importance to me.

Additionally, I have co-sponsored legislation to raise the fine on the illegal dumping that has been such a big issue all throughout our city. I have also gotten a grocery store into one of the most foot trafficked areas of my ward, which previously met the definition some use of a “food desert” (I say some, because the average income is too high in the area to meet all definitions).

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 15

How will you use your position on the Board of Alderman to increase access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care including but not limited to abortion care, pregnancy, and postpartum support?

Alder Bret Narayan

I have always supported the right of people to have bodily autonomy, including access to abortion. Additionally, I was a co-sponsor of a bill which was not successful, but would have offered far better pregnancy, maternity, and paternity leave to all city employees. I would certainly be an advocate for these issues when raised again.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 16

With more than 25% of renters in the city of St. Louis being rent-burdened, what is your plan to expand access to affordable housing and advocate for renter protections throughout the city?

Alder Bret Narayan

I am supporting Ald. Ingrassia’s bill to provide legal counsel for those renters who are going through the eviction process. This is a daunting process and to try to have to navigate it without the help of counsel is extremely difficult. Additionally, I have advocated for less “luxury apartments” to be built in new development and renovation and instead to focus on affordable units. Many people are priced out of many neighborhoods in the City because there simply are not affordable units on the market. As development and re-development happens, we need to make sure that as a region we are ensuring that affordable units are taken into account, particularly when looking towards the incentivization of any project.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 17

Do you support the demand for a citywide reparations process? Please explain your position.

Alder Bret Narayan

I am not opposed to reparations, however this question is very difficult to answer without more specifics. One of the only issues that I could see with a City-wide reparations process is that it could fall hopelessly short of what is actually due to many people in our region. I believe that a successful reparations program would likely have to come from the Federal Government, as they have the size, scope, and financial ability to ensure that all who are due reparations get what is truly due to them. I would absolutely hate to see a program fall short and then have people say that nothing more is due because reparations have been paid, while simultaneously not giving people anything close to what is due to them.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 18

What is your position on privatization as it relates to city assets? Please explain your position.

Alder Bret Narayan

I am opposed to privatization of City assets. Once you privatize an asset, it is virtually impossible to get it back. I was opposed to the privatization of our water before I was on the Board of Aldermen and while serving on the Board, I was very vocally opposed to airport privatization.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.

Question 19

What is your position on city/county reunification? Please explain your position.

Alder Bret Narayan

I am not opposed to some sort of City/County merger, or at least the consolidation of some services, but it would have to make sense for the City. I believe that any merger should come through the Board of Freeholders or through a ballot initiative of the people. The voters should absolutely have the final say on what, if any, merger or consolidations that may occur in the future.

Joe Vaccaro and Casey Otto

Did not respond.