

City of Miami 2019 Voter Guide

Candidate Responses



Our Future. Our City. Our Vote. Election Day: Nov 5, 2019

Question 1: Priorities

Should you be elected to city council, what would be your top three priorities in 2020?

District 1 Candidate Responses

Horacio Aguirre

Public Safety; we have a fine police department but not enough uniformed police officers for a city the size of Miami with population that doubles by day. We need more public transportation, especially the TROLLEY system, specifically for the Allapattah and Flagami/Blue Lagoon Communities and finally we need to create financial programs to allow our young people and senior citizens the ability to live in decent comfortable housing in our community.

Verania "Betty" Hermida

Realizing an equal, transparent and accessible form of government.
Raising the bar on requirements to provide strong community benefits attached to Special Area Plans.
Safeguarding our community by improving our infrastructure and sanitation issues.

Eleazar Meléndez

Public safety, creating jobs that pay well and making sure residents have decent, affordable housing.

District 2 Candidate Responses

Javier Gonzalez

District 2 Infrastructure to protect bay waters, Commissioner access & accountability to listen and act on residents needs, work to limit State Preemption to strengthen home rule.

Rosy Palomino

My top 3 priorities: 1) Leaner and smarter government; 2) Public safety; 3) Quality of life for families and seniors.

Ken Russell

My top three priorities have been and will continue to be preserving our environment, tackling the affordable housing crisis, and increasing mobility options. We've been able to lay the groundwork for all three and I am asking for a second term to fully deliver on the implementation and help shape Miami into a world-class city.

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Question 2: Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a crisis in our city. What will you do to create and preserve affordable housing for low-income residents and renters, especially near the urban core?

District 1 Candidate Responses

Horacio Aguirre

I once played a role in creating a consortium of banks that created a non-bank lending agency that funded commercial projects in underprivileged areas. I intend to create a similar financial creature for low income housing for young people and senior citizens.

Verania "Betty" Hermida

By raising the bar on requirements to provide strong community benefits attached to large-scale developments, to include inclusionary housing requirements for low to moderate income families and individuals.

Eleazar Meléndez

I will push the city commission to declare a housing emergency in the City of Miami, which will open up a new toolbox of zoning options and put price control on the table. I will also push the city commission to enact a new impact fee for property owners who choose to keep blighted lots or vacant luxury condos, based on the impact that has on housing costs, and use the funds to subsidize rents or build new affordable units.

District 2 Candidate Responses

Javier Gonzalez

Will fund future "Affordable Housing Finance Corp" to allow preservation and expansion of existing housing stock where applicable.

Rosy Palomino

1) Preserve our naturally affordable housing by protecting our single family home neighborhoods. 2) Sunset "Special Area Plans" and/or requires such zoning applications to go to a referendum. 3) Allow more live/work living arrangements beyond a home office. 4) Create a Miami Housing Authority, get county out of the way.

Ken Russell

I helped structure and campaigned for the Miami Forever Bond, which provides \$100M in funding for affordable housing that will be leveraged to obtain matching funding from County, State, & Federal partners. The bond is overseen by a community advisory board with a social justice seat that I added and is guided by an action plan put together in partnership with FIU's Metropolitan Center.

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Question 3: Climate Action and Adaptation

Are we acting quickly enough to become a sustainable city given our vulnerability to the climate crisis and sea level rise? If not, what would you do to accelerate our response to the changing climate?

District 1 Candidate Responses

Horacio Aguirre

We are not at all acting quickly enough. As chairman of the Miami River Commission I have been crying out the risks of rising sea levels and we now see that Miami Beach, Brickell Avenue and low-lying areas of the City of Miami and Miami Dade County flood with just a minimal thunder storm. We must implement solutions now or learn to swim. I have a plan to minimize the risks of flooding. As chairman of the Miami River Commission I have been crying out the risks of rising sea levels and we now see that Miami Beach, Brickell Avenue and low-lying areas of the City of Miami and Miami Dade County flood with just a minimal thunder storm. We must implement solutions now or learn to swim.

Verania "Betty" Hermida

We are not acting quickly enough and we are not placing enough emphasis on requirements for new developments to reduce their carbon footprint and on building infrastructure that can withstand the impacts of sea level rise and severe storms. Funds from the Miami Forever Bond may also be a means of supplementing some of these projects.

Eleazar Meléndez

No, we are not working quickly enough to become not just a sustainable, but a resilient city. I will work to make Miami adopt a "100% renewable energy" goal under the standards suggested by the Sierra Club. I will make sure we start tackling the climate change crisis through the lens of community resilience: how do we make sure the changing climate, and its effects on our most vulnerable communities, is used as an opportunity to build community, create new green industries and strengthen our social bonds?

District 2 Candidate Responses

Javier Gonzalez

Use Miami Forever Bond fund and any other matching State / Federal funds to target specific projects that will make our City better suited for escalating climate change.

Rosy Palomino

Short term ensure rising seas do not intrude into the sewer system, build higher sea walls and keeping our storm drains clear. Long term we need to encourage development that considers rising seas such as higher starting floors, self-sufficient water and energy, and incorporate water-based transit.

Ken Russell

The Miami Forever Bond also includes \$200M in funding for resilience initiatives throughout the city. With these funds, we are installing significantly more stormwater pumps and one-way tidal valves than ever before. I am also committed to finishing the Baywalk, which when completed will be a 5-mile linear walkway along Biscayne Bay that will also serve as a protective barrier to storm surge & sea-level rise.

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Question 4: Police Oversight and Reform

*How will you improve investigation and monitoring of police misconduct?
What changes would you make, such as an independent monitoring department or other mechanisms to restore public trust?*

District 1 Candidate Responses

Horacio Aguirre

As chairman of the City of Miami Civilian Investigative Panel, the city agency that oversees the police department, I played a major role in bringing about changes in our police department, in concert with the current and the last two excellent police chiefs. I believe that a strong civilian oversight agency continues to be the best tool for the people of the community to maintain public trust in law enforcement.

Verania "Betty" Hermida

We currently have a Citizen Investigative Panel in place to help monitor misconduct. However, I feel that further training of police officers is necessary, to include more community outreach and education paired with better approaches on responding to non-violent or special needs cases.

Eleazar Meléndez

1. I will advocate and prioritize robust enforcement of the city's rules around officer body cameras. 2. I will specifically seek to stop and reverse the trend of police militarization inside the Miami Police Department. 3. I will push to significantly re-structure the police department so that tasks that are non-essential to community policing can be performed by non-officers. 4. I will study the off-duty police program and the possibility of forcing officers into a rotating pool, as was done in Miami Beach, as a way to prevent racial profiling. 5. I will ask the city manager to negotiate financial penalties into the next union contract for officers who refuse to comply with the Independent Civilian Review Board, within the parameters of Florida law. I will also ask the city manager to negotiate bonuses for officers with exemplary records of community relations and engagement.

District 2 Candidate Responses

Javier Gonzalez

No Clue, don't think that is in my purview as a City Commissioner.

Rosy Palomino

Community policing is a big step. When we involve the public as part of the law enforcement process we change the relationship with police from adversarial to cooperative. Ultimately, civilian oversight is important whether it is over politicians or police officers. We should protect the civilian oversight mechanisms we have.

Ken Russell

The city has a Civilian Investigative Panel (CIP) which is tasked with reviewing cases of police misconduct. In my first term, I strengthened the CIP by tying any budget increase of the Police Department to be matched percentage-wise for the CIP. This allows the organization to have greater scope and more through reviews.

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Question 5: Campaign Finance Reform

Would you support campaign finance reform, including prohibiting donations by City vendors and lobbyists? Please explain your response.

District 1 Candidate Responses

Horacio Aguirre

I would indeed encourage campaign reform. The shenanigans and unlawful acts that today are part of a political campaign would shock the voters and media if it were reported. Reform is urgently needed and active oversight of campaigning conduct is needed.

Verania "Betty" Hermida

Lack of transparency and campaign corruption have made it very difficult for more qualified, grassroots, individuals to seek public office and allow for positive changes in our government system. It seems that special interests, corporations and individuals, are the ones steering the election ship. I would look forward to such a change.

Eleazar Meléndez

I will push for increased transparency, including for commissioners to disclose, at the time they take a vote, any contributions received or sought from parties that will be affected by said vote.

District 2 Candidate Responses

Javier Gonzalez

Yes, in 2015 I was the ONLY City Commissioner Candidate that signed on for campaign reform. It's simple 50K max for City Commission Campaigns and 250k max (5 districts x 50k) for Mayor.

Rosy Palomino

Yes! I call money from vendors, developers and lobbyists in political campaigns essentially "blood money." We are literally allowing our elected positions to be auctioned to the highest bidder!

Ken Russell

I am a proponent for transparency over outright bans that drive fundraising further underground. I have introduced the first digital and searchable campaign finance database and associated lobbyist tracker so that you can know who's giving money to who and who's lobbying who.

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