



# Logan Square Neighborhood Association

**REIMAGINE** Logan Square,  
Avondale, and Hermosa

## ALDERMANIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### Education



### Economic Development



### Housing



### Health and Wellness



### Immigration



## 31st Ward Answers

### Colin Bird-Martinez

#### 1. What resources or relationships do you uniquely have to support our economic development strategies?

I have been building strong relationships with organizers, lifelong community members, and local elected officials throughout my time as a progressive leader in Hermosa. Between serving as President of Hermosa Neighborhood Association, serving as an active member on Local School Council, and helping out multiple progressive candidates with the 31st Ward IPO, United Neighbors of the 35th Ward, and Reclaim Chicago, I have experience working with community members and elected officials to bring about positive change in our communities.

#### 2. How would you encourage local hiring and adopt anti-displacement standards we set?

I will create new employment opportunities and help local community businesses invest in their workers through subsidizing workforce training costs and providing grants for building repairs and remodeling. I will also fight to cut down the existing red tape that makes it so difficult for small businesses to succeed in Chicago.

#### 3. LSNA's immigration proposal is to beautify a corridor along Armitage Ave. in Hermosa. Our project will uplift and celebrate our immigrant community. What are specific ways you will support this project?

While this specific project is not in my ward, I believe it is important for us all to come together to better our communities, regardless of ward outlines on a map. I will work with aldermen in the 35th and 26th wards to move this project forward, and support this project however possible.

#### 4. How will you strengthen the city's Welcoming City Ordinance, particularly in regards to the gang database?

We must abolish the gang database immediately. This database is extremely flawed, includes many names of innocent people, and has been used as an unjust tool for deportations and racial injustices. We must also strengthen the city's Welcoming City Ordinance to make the City of Chicago a real sanctuary city. I will create an immigration defense committee in the 31st ward that stands with our community's immigrants against deportation by ICE. I will also be proactive in involving non-English speaking residents in decision making and events, and fight to make community college free for all, regardless of immigration status.

**5. How will you get the funding to make CPS High Schools a viable option in our neighborhood?**

We can solve our school funding issues through progressive revenue sources such as TIF reform and a graduated real estate transfer tax. I am also strongly in favor of a moratorium on charter schools, and will fight to ensure that our existing neighborhood public schools receive the funding to make crucial infrastructure improvements. In the 31st ward, our schools are struggling and enrollment is dropping, and Kelvyn Park High School is threatened to close. Supporting our neighborhood public schools is one of my top priorities, and in addition to the above, I will also work with parents, local school councils, and neighborhood associations to host enrollment drives.

**6. Schools and housing are inextricably connected. As an alderman, how are you going to influence city council to push forward community-driven initiatives such as the 606 Ordinance and the Emmett Street Affordable Housing Project both of which will create greater equity in our gentrifying communities and increase student enrollment in our neighborhood schools?**

I am in favor of a city-wide ordinance that charges a fee for de-converting small, multi-unit homes, similar to that of the 606 Ordinance. I am also in favor of reducing aldermanic prerogative that currently allows city council members to skirt the creation of affordable housing in areas of opportunity. I also want to bring a 100% limited equity co-operative into the ward, which will allow our working families to bring in equity while keeping their homes affordable.

**7. Juan has schizophrenia and he has an altercation with the police – he’s visibly agitated. It doesn’t end well. What is your response from a public health perspective?**

We must work towards repairing past harm by providing mental health services to victims of violence, including police violence. We must also increase access to affordable and accessible mental health care up front, and have more social workers trained for crisis intervention and psychological care on-call, so police are not the ones intervening with mental health emergencies.

**8. With the closure of the 6 mental health clinics, our communities have experienced instability. What funds and resources are you planning to invest in mental health?**

I was proud to help the Chicago Coalition to Save Our Mental Health Centers this past election day in talking to 31st ward residents and passing the referendum to bring back our public mental health clinic. I want to bring more funding to the Department of Family & Support Services by dismantling the ineffective Chicago Cook County Workforce Partnership. This would increase mental health funding and programming specifically designed for youth, the formerly incarcerated, people experiencing homelessness, and other vulnerable communities.

**9. 20,000 Latinx have been displaced in Logan square since 2000. How do you plan to prevent further displacement in Logan Square, Hermosa and Avondale?**

I believe that displacement is a form of violence, as it disrupts our communities, separates friends and families, and pulls children from their teachers and classmates. So much of displacement and gentrification is fueled by developers and greed, not by the people moving in or out. I am the only candidate running in the 31st ward that has pledged to not take money from developers, as I believe it is important to be accountable to my community, not developers. I will also work to preserve the bungalow belt and assist homeowners with home weatherization and other home improvements. I am also in favor of the legalization of accessory units such as two flats, coach houses, and garden units. I will also require any developers who want zoning changes in the 31st ward to include 20% affordable housing on-site, and will have a comprehensive community-driven zoning process.

**10. What will you do to support and champion a strong ARO that has a higher percentage of affordable units, requires more family size units and builds in more monitoring?**

I want to address the city's housing crisis by requiring 20% affordable housing in all new large residential developments, and require it to be on-site. I will be a strong advocate for an increase in affordable family-sized apartment units, and push for them to be located near our neighborhood schools. I also want to see the Chicago Housing Authority and City of Chicago promote the use of project-based vouchers to allow those using said vouchers to live in newly built, modern units, and protect them from having to pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

**Felix Cardona Jr.**

**1. What resources or relationships do you uniquely have to support our economic development strategies?**

Having worked in local government for 24 years with a focus on tax assessments, I believe I am uniquely prepared to help the residents and business owners appeal their property taxes successfully. This institutional knowledge will stabilize the community and help stem the exodus of residents and businesses.

**2. How would you encourage local hiring and adopt anti-displacement standards we set?**

I would encourage businesses to hire paid and unpaid interns in order to prepare young people for real job opportunities. I would also participate in all "shop local" events to strengthen our business community.

**3. LSNA's immigration proposal is to beautify a corridor along Armitage Ave. in Hermosa. Our project will uplift and celebrate our immigrant community. What are specific ways you will support this project?**

Once again, I would work with businesses to lower their real estate taxes and I will also work with them so they can take advantage of certain tax credits and taxpayer funded programs in order to beautify the commercial strip. I will also support all grant applications proposed by community-based groups for funding at all levels of government but with particular attention to funding that comes from Springfield for these kinds of quality-of-life programs.

**4. How will you strengthen the city's Welcoming City Ordinance, particularly in regards to the gang database?**

I support the city of Chicago's status as a sanctuary city. Further, I believe the gang database is both racist and discriminatory in nature. Law-enforcement has enough tools at their disposal to identify criminals living within our communities. But we certainly should not be engaging in the business of profiling young men and women of color in a way that will stigmatize them in the future and possibly reduce their employment opportunities.

**5. How will you get the funding to make CPS High Schools a viable option in our neighborhood?**

I have a two-pronged approach to resolve this problem. The first will be to have the trade unions come back into our city and to establish programs within our high schools to prepare our high school graduates for jobs immediately after graduation. While I support college opportunities for all of our young people, the reality is the college is not for everyone. With real vocational training, our youth will not be left behind or without a purpose. The second approach that I have to this problem is the complete and total elimination of TIFs. I have made my position on this very clear. TIFs are nothing but a conduit for the creation of a huge slush fund to be used at the discretion of the mayor for pet projects and favored developers. They siphon desperately needed tax dollars from our schools and the city's corporate budget.

**6. Schools and housing are inextricably connected. As an alderman, how are you going to influence city council to push forward community-driven initiatives such as the 606 Ordinance and the Emmett Street Affordable Housing Project both of which will create greater equity in our gentrifying communities and increase student enrollment in our neighborhood schools?**

I will work to strengthen LUCHA's 606 initiative and expand it to other areas with a high risk of residential destabilization. I have also been an advocate for a revision of the building code to allow for more attic and basement apartment units as starter homes for young people and to keep older residents in their communities.

**7. Juan has schizophrenia and he has an altercation with the police – he's visibly agitated. It doesn't end well. What is your response from a public health perspective?**

This scenario highlights the need for another two-pronged approach to the problem. First and foremost, we need to invest money in the re-training of all current police officers and make sure that the training of new police officers includes a mental health component. In the scenario presented, de-escalation would have been the order of the day. The second prong of the approach is the opening of new mental health clinics within our city borders. Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart and I don't agree on a lot, but he was right about one thing, Cook County Jail is currently the biggest mental health hospital in the City of Chicago. And that is shameful.

**8. With the closure of the 6 mental health clinics, our communities have experienced instability. What funds and resources are you planning to invest in mental health?**

At the very minimum, we need to bring back the six mental health clinics that were closed. Beyond that, I would say that we also need to petition our legislators in Springfield for money to open not only outpatient clinics, but three or four residential facilities for people truly in need of mental health services on a long-term basis.

**9. 20,000 Latinx have been displaced in Logan square since 2000. How do you plan to prevent further displacement in Logan Square, Hermosa and Avondale?**

The answer to this question is quite simple. Stabilize the neighborhood by properly assessing each and every parcel of real estate in these communities and also by revising the building code to provide for affordable attic and basement apartments in addition to more LUCHA type initiatives and the Emmett Street Affordable Housing Project. If you keep communities affordable you will not have the type of exodus of working class families that we are experiencing today.

**10. What will you do to support and champion a strong ARO that has a higher percentage of affordable units, requires more family size units and builds in more monitoring?**

I believe that the compromise reached in the Lathrop Homes case and the people of that community should serve as a model for strengthening the affordable residential ordinance. (ARO) I realize that compliance at that level took many years to achieve and some would say that it appeared that everybody was dragging their feet but in the end what you have is a mix of housing for the poor (CHA tenants), affordable housing units covered under ARO and market rate units. It's absolutely essential to make sure that everybody within those developments enjoy their communities with a certain level of peace, quiet and prosperity. Absent that kind of monitoring, those developments will be at risk of losing the market rate component. Those tenants will simply rent somewhere else where they believe they will be safer.

## **Milly Santiago**

### **1. What resources or relationships do you uniquely have to support our economic development strategies?**

Small businesses are paramount to my ward's economy. The city has a fund called the Small Business Improvement Fund and the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund to help small businesses grow. We collaborate with local chambers of commerce to help small and local businesses use these programs and funds. Additionally, I am committed to soliciting community input, when applicable, for new businesses that want to open in the ward. I have always championed for minority-owned businesses.

### **2. How would you encourage local hiring and adopt anti-displacement standards we set?**

We have to work with new companies to emphasize hiring locally. Many local organizations such as LSNA work with young people in the area that would benefit from part time work. Establishing private/public relationships would help produce a pipeline of local, interested candidates. Regarding displacement, it's directly linked to affordable housing. I voted against the increase in property taxes. And I have initiated a zoning committee to ensure that community concerns are heard before any major zoning decisions are made. I fought for The Fields to have additional affordable housing units than what the legal minimum is.

### **3. LSNA's immigration proposal is to beautify a corridor along Armitage Ave. in Hermosa. Our project will uplift and celebrate our immigrant community. What are specific ways you will support this project?**

While Armitage Avenue is not included in the 31st Ward boundaries, there are several ways in which my office could be useful: soliciting local talent or artists; involving local schools; identifying potential funding sources; identifying partner organizations; and advocating for the project, and others like it, in City Council. These are only several ways that I can help from an administrative standpoint. Our immigrant communities must continue to be not only celebrated, but acknowledged for their contributions to the city's culture and economy.

### **4. How will you strengthen the city's Welcoming City Ordinance, particularly in regards to the gang database?**

The database must be abolished, as it has proven to have false information that has negatively impacted the lives of many young Latino and African American men in particular. I have co-sponsored recent legislation that calls for the ban of the database for this very reason.

### **5. How will you get the funding to make CPS High Schools a viable option in our neighborhood?**

I am a strong proponent of introducing new programs in our local high schools to ensure that our youth have options. My goal is to work with CPS leadership to bring vocational and STEM programming. These changes are an uphill battle, however. The Local School Councils must also be involved in the planning and decision making, as they are the "on the ground" experts of what their children would benefit from. Not all children are going to college we need to provide a pathway for them to be job ready, especially in the fields of technology. New programming would attract more students, resulting in increased school funding.

**6. Schools and housing are inextricably connected. As an alderman, how are you going to influence city council to push forward community-driven initiatives such as the 606 Ordinance and the Emmett Street Affordable Housing Project both of which will create greater equity in our gentrifying communities and increase student enrollment in our neighborhood schools?**

I have co-sponsored an ordinance that will help low income families have access to affordable housing and I will vote for any legislation that advances the issue of affordability. In order to increase enrollment we need to have new programs that prepare students for the changing economy. These new programs in vocational education and/or STEM will prepare them with the tools to succeed.

**7. Juan has schizophrenia and he has an altercation with the police – he’s visibly agitated. It doesn’t end well. What is your response from a public health perspective?**

Without a doubt, we need more investment in mental health services. Police officers have a difficult job, and also need to be properly prepared to confront people that may have a history of mental health issues. I will work with my colleagues at the city and state level to ensure that the root causes of mental health issues – such as exposure to trauma - are addressed, and that people have access to the appropriate resources to get help. We must also work collectively to reduce the stigma of mental health among communities of color.

**8. With the closure of the 6 mental health clinics, our communities have experienced instability. What funds and resources are you planning to invest in mental health?**

As you may know, the city and the state is in a terrible financial situation. But we must find additional funds to help invest in mental health. Many of our seniors suffer from mental health issues and I want to make sure they have access to medical help.

**9. 20,000 Latinx have been displaced in Logan square since 2000. How do you plan to prevent further displacement in Logan Square, Hermosa and Avondale?**

First we must fight to keep property taxes from increasing. I voted against the property tax increase, because I knew our homeowners would take a financial hit. Second, we must work on ensuring equity and fairness at the Cook County Assessor’s office and the Board of Review. I was proud to endorse Fritz Kaeigi to usher in a new administration at the office. We are one of the most over-assessed neighborhoods in the city while downtown skyscrapers get the tax breaks. I will fight to ensure equity in our property tax system. And my opponent Felix Cardona was the Berrios’s right hand man at the Board of Review, he helped Donald Trump save over \$14 million in property taxes through indicted Ald. Ed Burke, while homeowners in our neighborhoods had to pay more taxes. (SunTimes 6-8-19). We also need to focus on building new affordable housing and I have been working with multiple organizations to achieve this goal. I also do support the idea of a community land trust to acquire and develop new affordable housing units.

**10. What will you do to support and champion a strong ARO that has a higher percentage of affordable units, requires more family size units and builds in more monitoring?**

We need to work directly with our local state legislators to represent us in Springfield to repeal the ban on cities instituting “Rent Control” measures. We have seen examples from New York to California that this is the most effective way to maintain affordable housing. We must also work on new ordinances that encourage developers to build mix income housing. And we can encourage that by charging heavy penalties if the developments don’t have affordable units.