



*Building Community,
Seeking the Common Good in Metro Jackson.*

Agenda for Rebuilding Jackson

Introduction:

Working Together Jackson is a broad-based coalition of institutions founded in 2012, committed to collaborative strategies that address many of the problems facing Jackson. Our institutions cross the racial, religious, and economic divisions of the city. Our common vision of **Rebuilding Jackson** and our pragmatic approach to community problem-solving bring us together.

Current Agenda:

- **Jackson 500 Workforce Development Project:** Working Together Jackson has established a partnership with Hinds Community College to develop a workforce strategy to train local residents toward a career path for living wage jobs with benefits. WTJ recruits and helps create the support base for participants while they are in training. To date, there are over 200 students in the program with a retention rate of 94%. In a year and a half of operation, 20 graduates who have moved from unemployment or minimum wage jobs to jobs ranging from \$15 to \$25 an hour. These efforts are helping build productive citizens while meeting the needs of employers. **The City of Jackson's administration and council are needed to aid in further development of this strategy with a focus on jobs created by the infrastructure redevelopment efforts.**
- **Public Accountability Sessions:** In the municipal elections held four years ago and in the Special Mayoral Election held after the death of Mayor Lumumba, WTJ met with every candidate for Mayor and Council and asked them to agree to run "clean" campaigns that focused solely on the issues and to also work with us on our agenda for rebuilding Jackson. The Mayoral Candidates in these two elections appeared before two non-partisan Accountability Sessions where over 400 institutional leaders gathered at each session to support the WTJ agenda and seek cooperative agreements from the candidates. **We are asking the Mayor and Council to continue this process through small and large public accountability sessions with WTJ Leaders.**
- **Blight Eradication and Neighborhood Revitalization:** Recognizing the need for a source of funding to aid in renewing our neighborhoods, WTJ worked with the City of Jackson to establish the first affordable housing trust fund in the state. Recently, Working Together Jackson exposed the worst code violations in the city, which involved property owned by the Jackson State University Development Foundation. WTJ and its local member institutions worked with the Foundation, local and state officials, and Revitalize Mississippi to solve this problem. Another example of our work in this area is WTJ's five-year leadership development effort at Rosemont Baptist Church that has led to the redevelopment and clean-up of the area near the church. Partnering with Revitalize Mississippi, this neighborhood will establish a land trust comprised of more than 100 state-owned lots, which will be used for redevelopment of the area. Through the work of WTJ members Rosemont, New Horizon Church and Rising Sun Baptist Church, approximately 400 lots within several blocks of each other will be redeveloped for homeownership. **In order for these redevelopment efforts to be successful, we need the City to fund and develop the Jackson Housing Trust Fund passed unanimously by council through the work of WTJ.**
- **Infrastructure Redevelopment:** WTJ worked with the City of Jackson, the Greater Jackson Partnership to pass the city's 1% infrastructure sales tax. With a two-week window for Get Out the Vote Work, WTJ produced over 2,000 "yes" votes, 20% of the total vote. WTJ has held public accountability sessions on the progress of this work and has compelled the City to publicly and clearly lay out the progress and future-plans. **The Mayor and**

Council need to continue and expand this accountability process through regular reports to the membership of Working Together Jackson.

- **Rebuilding Support for the Jackson Public Schools:** Working Together Jackson is working with the JPS Board of Trustees, the Interim-Superintendent, and a broad group of stakeholders across the city, including business leaders, to build a comprehensive vision for rebuilding JPS. Currently, there is no common vision or community consensus regarding the crisis facing our schools. At present, there is a fractious and divided citizenry in relationship to JPS. WTJ is conducting Education, Listening, and Visioning Sessions across the city to gather input from community members regarding how to move JPS forward. Over 300 institutional leaders have participated in these sessions to date, and we will engage another 200 within the next two weeks. From this process, there is an emerging leadership for a three-year community engagement campaign in every feeder pattern of the city. Our schools can only be rebuilt if a united city helps lead the way. **The Mayor and Council need to work cooperatively with WTJ and JPS to provide leadership for the rebuilding of our schools.**
- **Food Deserts:** Working Together Jackson has worked with our member, Hope Enterprise Corporation, and local public officials to address the problem of access to quality food in the neighborhoods of Jackson. The recent opening of the Jackson Cash Store in the old Kroger building is a part of our work. **We are currently partnering with the American Heart Association to build support for a Fresh Food Finance Initiative in Jackson, Hinds County and throughout the state of Mississippi. We will be seeking support from the Mayor and Council as we develop these efforts.**

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED

- **Public Safety, Criminal Justice Reform and Gun Violence:** Working Together Jackson is developing work in this area, and we are asking that the Mayor and Council engage us with the police department in developing strategies to face the issues of public safety necessary for the rebuilding of Jackson.
- **Disability Rights Issues:** Working Together Jackson supports the work of the Disability Rights Community to gain full compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in Jackson. We ask the Mayor and the Council to work with us in seeking full compliance with the ADA and the IDEA.
- **Immigration Issues:** Working Together Jackson and its institutions come from diverse yet common religious traditions that call for welcoming the stranger. In this very time of hyper-tension around issues of immigration we ask that the Mayor, the Council and city officials work with the WTJ institutions in connection to the immigrant community and with state and local officials to develop lawful ways of welcoming immigrants into our community.
- **Civil Campaigns:** Working Together Jackson believes that our political climate of hyper-partisanship and personal attack is doing serious damage to the political participation and civic engagement. We ask that all candidates join in the **Working Together Jackson Pledge to conduct an issue based campaign and to refrain from personal attacks against opponents.**
- **Accountability Sessions:** We ask that you pledge to participate in the Working Together Jackson Accountability Session at 7 p.m. on May 9th or 11th if you make the run-off or win in the first primary and that you will commit to meet with WTJ leaders on a regular basis.

Conclusion:

This agenda for Rebuilding Jackson is a developing process, and we ask all candidates to join us in continuing to work to Rebuild Jackson.

Questions and Frame

Questions Frame: Our questions do not include every issue on which we are working. At the center of our questions is our relationship to you as Mayor. We will come to you having done our homework. We will never simply ask you to fix things. Our desire is for Working Together Jackson, the new administration, the City Council and other partners become a team, working together to rebuild Jackson. You have one minute to answer each question.

Workforce Development

Would the students who are involved in the Jackson 500 program please stand? These students are a part of the pathway to living wage employment and entrepreneurship that Working Together Jackson and Hinds Community College have built. Will you partner with us to find additional funding to continue to systematize this pathway to rebuilding Jackson by building our workforce, and will you work to connect the infrastructure jobs and other jobs created by contracts with the City to the Jackson 500 Partnership?

Education

Jackson will recover when we rebuild the Jackson Public Schools. Every issue in Jackson is tied to the success of our JPS. Members of WTJ met with each school board member and the Interim Superintendent to listen and offer our assistance. We have three questions for you tonight:

1. It is critical that you use your voice as Mayor to encourage the school board and administrators of JPS to establish a sense of urgency to around the failing schools and comply with the State's Corrective Action Plan. WTJ is exploring the development and implementation of an organizing and leadership skills training process to share with the Board, the administration, local principals and local school communities. We seek to work with you in this strategic effort. How will you, as Mayor, work to improve JPS for all children?
2. How will you develop a process to nominate the best-qualified and dedicated Jacksonians to serve on the JPS Board and work with the City Council to ensure the approval of these candidates?
3. We ask you to appoint a person to serve as an ombudsperson or liaison between City Hall and JPS. This person would attend JPS Board meetings and be a conduit for information between City Hall and JPS, and could also help families navigate the often-confusing system.

Food Access

Access to quality healthy foods is a major issue in Jackson and Hinds County. Will you lead the creation of a partnership with WTJ and Hinds County to develop and fund a fresh-food finance initiative for the city and county? Toward this goal will you convene with us within your first three months in office a summit meeting with County officials to begin development of this process?

Blight Elimination and Homeownership

WTJ and its member institutions are involved in many efforts to rebuild Jackson through the redevelopment of our neighborhoods with a special emphasis on homeownership. Will you work with WTJ to complete the development and funding of the Jackson Housing Trust Fund?

Will you work with WTJ in development of its emerging homeownership partnerships in West Jackson, where three of our member institutions have secured over 400 lots, all within a mile of each other, for the purpose of affordable homeownership development? Toward this goal will you travel to New York with us in June to visit Nehemiah Housing?

Will you work with WTJ and other officials to secure \$4million of Blight Eradication dollars from the Federal government?

Regular Meeting Pledge

Candidates Closing Remarks and Pledge Signing

We ask that you commit to meet with Working Together Jackson at least once each quarter and more times if necessary. We ask that you demonstrate this commitment by signing our Rebuilding Jackson Agenda, and then after signing, you have two minutes to make your closing remarks.