

## **Candidate Information**

1. First name \*Buddy
2. Last name\* Dyer
3. Campaign Website\* [www.buddyfororlando.com](http://www.buddyfororlando.com)
4. Campaign Facebook \* <https://www.facebook.com/BuddyDyerForOrlando>
5. Campaign Twitter\* <https://twitter.com/buddyfororlando?lang=en>
6. Campaign Instagram \* BuddyforOrlando
7. Please list the LGBTQ+ organizations you are affiliated with and any donations you have given. \*
  - One Orlando Fund
  - The LGBTQ+ Center Orlando
  - Zebra Coalition
  - Aspire Health
  - Hope and Help Center for Central Florida
  - Two Spirit Health Services
  - Equality Florida
  - Mayors Against LGBTQ+ Discrimination
8. Please summarize your history of community involvement. This may include city boards, civic associations, non-profits, etc. \*

As Mayor of Orlando I serve on the boards for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority Board, Central Florida Expressway Authority, MetroPlan Orlando, Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission, and Lynx. I am proud to serve on the board of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In this role, I was a founding member of the Mayors and Business Leaders Center for Compassionate and Equitable Cities to support mayors' efforts to make cities across the nation more equitable, more inclusive, and more compassionate. The Center, along with the African American Mayors Association led the creation of the Mayors Compact on Racial Equity to advance racial equity in cities by acting, individually and collectively, to dismantle institutional racism and systemic inequities in measurable and sustainable ways. Through my role as City Mayor I have spearheaded our Committee on Livability and Healthy Aging, Orlando Mayor's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, Mayor's Veterans Advisory Council, Mayor's Citizens Oversight Committee, and the City's Board on Multicultural Affairs.

9. Please summarize the work you have performed in the past five years to further LGBTQ+ rights.\*

For a full list of the work I have performed please see the City of Orlando's Mayor's Office LGBTQ+ webpage. The biggest testament to our work has been that for the ninth year in a row, the City has obtained the highest score of 100 on the Municipal Equality Index (MEI), which reflects our ongoing commitment of preserving a democratic and inclusive government that serves and represents our diverse community. The MEI is a nationwide evaluation of more than 400 cities on how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of LGBTQ+ people who live and work there. Cities are rated based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and the city leadership's public position on equality.

10. Please list other endorsements you have received. \*

- Equality Florida
- AFL-CIO
- Fraternal Order of Police Orlando Lodge#25
- Orlando Professional Firefighters Local 1365
- Congressman Maxwell Alejandro Frost
- Congressman Darren Soto
- Former Congresswoman Val Demings
- Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings
- State Senator Linda Stewart
- Geraldine Thompson and Vic Torres
- State Representatives Lavon Bracy Davis
- Anna Eskamani
- Bruce Antone
- Rita Harris
- Johanna Lopez
- Orange County Property Appraiser Amy Mercado

- Orange County Clerk of Courts Tiffany Moore Russell
- Orange County Tax Collector Scott Randolph
- Orange County Sheriff John Mina.

## **About Your Campaign and LGBTQ Issues**

11. What motivated you to run for this position?\*

I love Orlando. And, my passion and sense of purpose for serving our residents as Mayor has never been stronger. We've done so much together, but there's always more work to do and more challenges to take on. Expanding prosperity for everyone who calls our city home requires collaboration and partnership. We must bring as many voices and perspectives to the table as possible to keep working together to make Orlando the best place in America to live, work, learn, play and raise a family for everyone.... everyone... who calls our City home. I know that Rainbow Democrats share my belief in the power of inclusion and partnership to solve problems and expand opportunity for people. That's why I would be humbled to earn your organization's endorsement.

12. What does being an ally or advocate for the LGBTQ+ community mean to you?\*

To me, being an ally or advocate for the LGTQ+ community means ensuring that under my leadership as the City of Orlando Mayor that we establish and promote policies, ordinances, and initiatives to support our local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGTBQ+ Community). Since I took office, I have insisted on an inclusive government that ensures Orlando is a City for everyone. Our community is known worldwide for being a welcoming and inclusive city for everybody, regardless of gender, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity. I'm beyond proud of our work fostering initiatives that advocate and serve the LGTBQ+ community.

13. Have you attended an LGBTQ+ Pride Month celebration or Orlando's Come Out With Pride? \*

Yes

14. Have you attended or supported a drag show or drag performance in our community? \*

Yes

15. How would you ensure that your office acknowledges and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community?\*

It is essential to understand that the LGBTQ+ community is a core part of our Community Investment Program, which provides millions of dollars in grant funding to nonprofit groups making an impact in Orlando. In addition, both the Mayor Office within the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Orlando Police Department have LGTBW+ liaisons. These liaisons serve as an extension of the City of Orlando to the LBGTQ+ Community.

16. Will you ensure that you and your staff receive competency training on the LGBTQ+ community, emphasizing unconscious bias?\*

Yes

17. Would you condemn instances of hate speech in your organization and the community at large? \*

Yes

18. Legislation from Tallahassee has caused a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Orange County. How would you go about reducing discrimination in your District or local community? \*

Under my leadership, we continue to ensure our community knows that regardless of this harmful legislation, Orlando will remain inclusive. The City of Orlando opposed this legislation and in response, I published an op-ed ensuring our LGBTQ+ community and friends are aware of how serious I take this position. In Orlando, together we've been able to create a city that is committed to working to help children thrive not only during their formative years, but also prepare for successful futures. Making sure they feel protected, accepted and valued is a big part of our work. That's why we cannot take lightly the potential impact of dangerous rhetoric and hateful legislation aimed at silencing LGBTQ+ students and families in Florida. Please see the link below for the op-ed: Buddy Dyer: Orlando will remain inclusive in face of hateful legislation | Commentary - Orlando Sentinel

19. There is a lack of knowledge when it comes to the transgender community. Sometimes, the services offered in public offices are often unfamiliar with the needs of the transgender community. What actions would you take to ensure that the services your office provides will be cognizant of the needs of the transgender community? \*

Here in the City of Orlando we proudly fly the Progress Pride and Transgender Pride flags at City Hall during Pride Month and Transgender Awareness week - and this isn't just an empty performance - it's to celebrate the transgender community and to make sure they feel seen, heard, and embraced. In addition, I'm very proud of the work by the Orlando Police Department (OPD) in this area. In November 2015, OPD adopted a Transgender Persons policy to codify through policy one of the tenets of this agency: To treat all people with dignity and respect. The purpose of this policy is to

establish guidelines for the appropriate treatment of transgender individuals who come into contact with and/or require the services of OPD. OPD treats every person with courtesy and respect. It's important for OPD officers and personnel to know, understand and utilize the appropriate nomenclature and preferable manners of address, and to be aware of laws including public accommodations and other issues attendant to this population.

20. During a town hall, a constituent describes being gay or transgender disparagingly. How would you constructively respond in this situation? \*

I would condemn their comments and encourage them to stay open-minded and think about the harm their disparaging comments can cause. I would offer this person resources through the City of Orlando.

21. How would you respond to a person intentionally misgendering a transgender or non-binary person?\*

I would condemn their comments and encourage them to stay open-minded and think about the harm their disparaging comments can cause. I would offer this person resources through the City of Orlando.

22. Orange County continues to embrace urban sprawl despite a plethora of data that links urban sprawl to severe strains on our housing, employment, healthcare, and public transit systems (to name a few). What are your thoughts on Orange County's growth? \*

Please note, as I am running for the City of Orlando Mayor I am speaking about the City in this response as I am not running for Orange County Mayor. As Mayor, I have worked tirelessly to advance our community's shared vision for Orlando as America's premier 21st Century City. By increasing cooperation and partnership among Central Florida's various governments, business and civic communities and residents, we have paved the way for a number of remarkable accomplishments for greater Orlando in a very short period of time. Our achievements include the expansion of transportation options, the creation of more than 1,500 affordable housing units, a 50 percent reduction in crime, the creation of thousands of new businesses and jobs, and the continuous movement toward 100 percent renewable energy citywide. During my time as Mayor, the City's comprehensive plan has been amended to incentivize urban infill over suburban sprawl, transit-oriented development, compact, walkable neighborhoods, and the preservation of environmentally sensitive land outside of the urban core.

23. To expand upon the prior statement, what could Orange County do regarding development that would better serve the communities? \*

Of course, success isn't a destination, it's a direction. There's always more work to do and new challenges to overcome. And, we can always improve. I'm extremely proud of multiple initiatives we have approved over the past year as it relates to the way we are addressing some of our most pressing challenges. And, we can always improve. I'm extremely proud of multiple initiatives we have approved over the past year as it relates to the way we are addressing some of our most pressing challenges. Just a few weeks ago as Orlando City Council voted on an ordinance to approve a \$9 million affordable housing trust fund. We are in the process of approving this ordinance and I'm excited for what it can accomplish for our residents. In addition, we as a City Council are building a plan to commit \$1 million in federal money towards housing rehabilitation for low-income households with a heightened focus in North Parramore and the South Parramore/Holden Heights area for those residents at 80 percent or below of the area median income. We are sensitive to all the different economic activity going on in these areas and we're trying to make sure we keep housing that is truly affordable in the neighborhood so that the residents that live there are not forced out or displaced. This is important for our elderly population who are often times than not on a fixed income.

## City of Orlando Mayor Questions

24. What steps will you take to increase your office's visibility with the LGBTQ+ community, including encouraging voting participation? \*

The City of Orlando bid for 2026 World Pride was one of my favorite initiatives I worked on as Mayor with a goal of increasing Orlando's LGBTQ+ community to the world. I served as the honorary co-chair of this effort, and a couple members of his staff served on the bid committee). Through this effort, I flew to Guadalajara, Mexico to present our bid at the World Pride conference. We were ultimately one of the two finalists for WorldPride, but lost out to Amsterdam. I'm still extremely proud of our efforts. Orlando city council to vote on \$25,000 for 2026 WorldPride bid -Orlando Sentinel. Since I took office, I have fostered an inclusive government that embraces equality and diversity and celebrates our cultures. For the last nine years, Orlando has received a perfect score on the annual Municipal Equality Index by the Human Rights Campaign. In 2019, I created the first Multicultural Affairs Committee and Orlando became the first city in Florida to recognize LGBTQ-certified businesses. And last year, in the wake of a series of bills aimed at silencing the LGBTQ community, I recommitted the City of Orlando to continuing to take action to help create an inclusive community for all. Under my leadership, the city has added the LGBTQ+ community as a core part of the Community Investment program, which provides millions of dollars in grant funding to nonprofit groups making an impact in Orlando.

25. How would you support creating an LGBTQ+ Advisory Board that would directly link the City of Orlando and the LGBTQ+ community?\*

We have LGBTQ+ liaisons at City Hall and the Orlando Police Department along with other communities.

26. According to research, 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+ (Source True Colors United). What immediate actions would you take as a City of Orlando Mayor to reduce and prevent homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ youth? \*

Adolescence isn't an easy time, especially for LGBTQ+ children, who studies show are four times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their straight peers. That's why we will continue to ensure that City of Orlando youth programs are welcoming for all residents. Our Orlando Youth Empowerment Summit, a partnership the Zebra Coalition, will keep growing to create a safe place for LGBTQ+ youth to express themselves, learn, share, and make connections. And we must make sure that all residents learn about LGBTQ+ history, including the Pulse tragedy, which disproportionately impacted our region's LGBTQ+, Latinx, Black, and other communities of color.

27. Where do you believe the focus should be for Orlando in preparing for and preventing the damaging effects of climate change? \*

Through recycling, composting, energy efficiency and the planting of thousands of trees, the city is conserving more and wasting less, evolving into one of the Greenest Cities in America under Mayor Dyer's leadership. Through a Bloomberg Climate Change grant, Mayor Dyer has made the bold commitment to achieve 100 percent renewable energy for municipal buildings by 2030, zero waste by 2040 and 100 percent renewable energy citywide by 2050. Earlier this year, the U.S Green Building Council awarded Mayor Dyer the Sustainability Legend Award and Orlando received a LEED Gold City designation. Under Mayor Dyer's leadership, the City of Orlando government has been working on transforming community centers into resilience hubs by constructing weather-resistant shelters for residents battling hurricanes, severe weather, and extreme heat. Mayor Dyer is also committed to investing in more charging stations around the cities to encourage the use of electric cars.

28. A 2021 study found that the Orlando metropolitan area has the 8th highest wage gap in the nation. The estimated hourly wage is \$12.94, but the wage required to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Orlando before the COVID-19 Pandemic is \$23.60. What actions would you take as City of Orlando Mayor to decrease this wage gap and promote affordable living in Orlando?\*

Over the last few years, the City of Orlando has invested more than \$43 million to create or preserve housing options for residents at all income levels. Since 2017, the city has built or rehabilitated over 1,000 units for residents. In total, the city has initiated the creation of 14 affordable housing developments. Mayor Dyer has also served as one of the region's leading voices on ending homelessness, guiding a collaboration among jurisdictions, service providers and community groups. Through the Housing First Initiative, 96% of chronically homeless persons placed into permanent supportive housing remain housed. In 2022, Mayor Dyer re-committed to this effort by announcing Accelerate Orlando, a plan to address both affordable housing and homelessness using \$58 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan. He plans to invest in the creation of new, affordable apartments for families and individuals, as well as developing units specifically for our

workers, for low-income residents, and for LGBTQ youth. The totality of the \$58 million in funds was virtually all of the City's ARPA allotment from the federal government. As I am well aware housing is one of the most critical areas we need to invest in as a community, it was an obvious choice to put this funding towards Affordable Housing and Homelessness. Mayor Dyer remains committed to working with regional partners and across jurisdictional lines to continue to address our region's housing challenges and provide quality, affordable housing to our residents

29. As a City of Orlando Mayor, what actions would you take to help struggling parent(s) and make Orange County an affordable place for families? \*

Currently we are housing nearly 400 previously homeless residents in permanent, supportive housing. And, over the past few years, we've invested more than \$43 million to create or preserve housing options for residents at all income levels. The City of Orlando plans to accelerate our efforts by investing in agencies who provide shelter and wrap-around services to homeless individuals during the day, particularly in downtown Orlando. These actions have been and can be critical to a struggling parent trying to get by and help make the City of Orlando more affordable.

Our plans include:

- Investing in the Christian Service Center, Salvation Army, and Coalition for the Homeless to modernize their campuses and provide services unsheltered homeless need during the daytime
- Investing in Aspire to create a new unit to expand mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Investing in Pathlight Home to reinvigorate the vision for the Pathway's Drop-in Center supporting the development of permanent supportive housing and additional space for essential daytime services

The city will also make investments that will increase the overall availability of affordable housing in our city by:

- Converting the Ambassador Hotel on Colonial Drive into 150 apartments for working families and individuals, including 15 units for permanent supportive housing
- Transforming another blighted hotel into 22 affordable units to support LGBTQ+ youth
- Acquiring property to develop up to 80 apartments for workforce housing on Jefferson Street
- Developing 10 single-family homes in Parramore
- Expanding down payment support, housing counseling and access to housing repairs for low-income residents.

In addition to our efforts to "Accelerate Orlando" investments in homelessness and affordable housing, the city is also allocating funding to support:

- RISE Employment and Training Program
- Community Violence Intervention
- Broadband access to bridge the digital divide

Job training programs

- The city dedicated nearly \$4 million in the FY 20-21 budget towards providing equitable opportunities to education and jobs.
- The city continues to connect residents to careers in some of Orlando's fastest growing industries including construction, distribution, advanced manufacturing, healthcare and transportation and logistics, through the city's BluePrint 2.0 program.
- Residents who are enrolled in one of more than 100 job and vocational training opportunities are eligible for a subsidy in the amount of \$125 per week to cover the costs of housing, food and other needs.

30. Despite mental illness among adults and children being at an all-time high, Florida ranks next to last on per capita spending on mental health programs. What are your immediate and long-term plans for addressing this epidemic in Orange County? \*

I am proud that in the City of Orlando's FY 2020/2021 budget we refocused funding to strengthen community policing efforts, enhance review and training for use of force and fund mental health assistance for officers.

In response to the mental health crisis we have created or expanded the following:

Created a Community Response Team so trained behavioral health professionals responding to some non-violent 911 calls, connecting those in need to treatment and support.

- In 2020, the city increased funding for our Families, Parks and Recreation budget to expand the Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) and My Brother's Keeper programs.
- The expansion of PKZ will add programs in three additional neighborhoods including Holden Heights, Mercy Drive and Englewood in an effort to reach more at-risk youth in order to

- increase academic performance, reduce juvenile crime, and reduce teen pregnancies.
- The expansion of the My Brother's Keeper program will include four new neighborhoods in order to connect more of Orlando's boys and young men of color with mentoring, support networks and skills to help them improve academic performance, increase employment opportunities and reduce incarceration.

31. The Florida Republican Party is passing legislation that strips away LGBTQ+ rights, starting with our children. These shamelessly discriminatory bills force LGBTQ+ families to reconsider their future in Florida. What would you tell the parents of LGBTQ+ children who feel they must leave Florida to protect their children? \*

I can't imagine the uncertainty and fear that you and your child are going through. Only you and your family can decide what is best for you - but I can tell you that the state leaders that support this hateful legislation do not speak for us in Orlando. You are safe here. You are valued and embraced here. You make Orlando a better place to live. And this will always be true as long as I am Mayor.

32. The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health found that 45% of LGBTQ+ students seriously considered suicide, and 1-in-5 LGBTQ+ attempted it. How would you lead on this issue and work to decrease these statistics during your term in office?\*

Mayors have lots of responsibilities but are often constrained by outdated or intentionally obstructive state laws - and always too few resources. But one of the privileges and duties of the mayor's office is to find ways to focus community attention on what's important. Initiatives like our Community Response Team responding to 911 calls and the funding of critical organizations like the Zebra Coalition help decrease these troubling statistics. By boldly and intentionally talking about LGBTQ+ youth mental health, we can bring awareness, individual and community action, and maybe most important - we can use our position as leaders to meet with and remind LGBTQ+ youth that their lives and identities are an essential element to our City.

33. What are the top environmental concerns you are seeing, and what solutions do you plan to bring forward if you were elected? \*

Unplanned suburban sprawl has profound environmental consequences. It reduces greenspace and wildlife habitat, consumes more building material and public infrastructure, requires more energy intensive commutes, and has a disproportionate impact on limited water resources when compared to compact, walkable and transit-oriented urbanism. Sustainable planning and zoning is also squarely within the purview of local government. If re-elected as Mayor, I will continue to support comprehensive plan and land development amendments that make it easier to build up, rather than out - and make it easier to build sustainable, walkable, bikeable, and transit- friendly neighborhoods.

## **Additional Questions**

34. Is there anything else you want us to know about why the Rainbow Democrats should support your candidacy?

Orlando is one of those American cities where we can say without a doubt, our best days are ahead of us. While we've built many things over the past few years from the Amway Center, the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, SunRail, Creative Village, Medical City, a major new terminal at Orlando International Airport, and countless new homes in Downtown Orlando - what pleases me above all else is that we've built a new spirit and pride in Orlando. And a core principle of that new-found pride is that Orlando is an open, tolerant, and diverse community that welcomes - and celebrates - everyone.