

Chicago Tribune aldermanic candidate questionnaire

The Chicago Tribune Editorial Board invites you to complete its candidate questionnaire for the 2019 municipal election. Your responses will be used to help determine our endorsement. This survey is due Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2019, at noon.

Please be concise with your answers.

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form. Not davidjordan233@gmail.com? [Switch account](#)

* Required

Name *

Jacob Ringer

Ward you are running in *

43rd

Campaign contact person and phone *

Deputy Campaign Manager Bashir Nuruddin, 414-339-8226

Date of Birth *

8/7/1985

Portrait (please attach) *

Home address *

614 West Willow Street, Chicago IL

Office address *

2120 North Halsted Street, Chicago IL

Occupation. Please be specific; titles and proper names. *

Currently campaigning full-time for 43rd Ward Alderman

Sources of outside income *

I am the beneficiary of a trust left to me by my father. My family owned property in Lincoln Park and Old Town for over 50 years.

Spouse occupation. Please be specific; titles and proper names *

Dana Ringer, Senior Director at Kaizen Health

Please list any relatives who work for a government body or lobby, consult or hold contracts with a government body. Be specific. *

None

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Please explain *

I have not been convicted of a crime.

Previous political experience *

I am a longtime Chicago resident with deep roots in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. From the time I was old enough to walk, I understood that serving this community would be my life's work. As a kid, I went to community meetings with my parents, who taught me how to speak up and advocate for what I care about. As a teen, I volunteered for area programs that helped my severely disabled sister. Now as an adult, I seek to represent the people of this area in City Council.

I graduated as valedictorian of a private high school that helped me navigate my own learning differences. I received my undergraduate degree in finance from Tulane University. While there, I saw tragedy strike first-hand as Hurricane Katrina literally uprooted my school community. It was an education that accelerated my interest in serving others. I later completed my Master's degree in Finance from Tulane. As part of my commitment to serving others, I spent close to a year in Ghana, Myanmar and Indonesia working in schools and on community projects.

When I returned to Chicago after grad school, I knew my professional life must be rooted in helping make Chicago and our neighborhoods stronger. In 2011, I became the first chief of staff for the Chief Financial Officer of Chicago. Clearly, city finances are one of the most pressing problems for our city and I immersed myself in understanding the challenges and opportunities we face. I am proud when I hear Mayor Emanuel say that his greatest accomplishment in 8 years as Mayor was in strengthening our city finances.

Among the projects I worked on with the City's Finance team was municipal marketing. With innovative ideas, we helped deliver \$25 million of new revenues without raising taxes or cutting services and is on track to deliver more than \$200 million over 20 years. I also helped create the first Chicago Investors Conference, opening the City's books to the people that buy City bonds and providing transparency to our citizens. That idea has now become a market best practice, copied by cities around the nation. I participated in reworking the highly-disparaged parking meters contract, eliminating paid parking in our neighborhoods on Sundays and launching pay-by-cell. I also helped shine a spotlight on the unacceptable funding levels of our four pension funds.

After my time at the City, I went to work for a law firm, where I focused on consulting and strategy for companies ranging from start-ups and non-profits to Fortune 500 sized companies. I used my expertise to help clients with Chicago-based projects work with current Alderman and other stakeholders to guide them to make decisions more quickly and strategically. I then joined mHUB, Chicago's non-profit manufacturing incubator focused on creating jobs for Chicagoans and providing the conditions for physical product innovation to thrive. At this incubator, I was responsible for maintaining and recruiting

a diverse membership and helping start-ups and others in the industry look at old problems in new ways. I left that position to focus full-time on the 43rd ward.

I have always volunteered in some capacity and after I moved back to Chicago I made an effort to get involved at the community level. I joined the Lincoln Park Auxiliary Board in 2012 and from 2016 to 2018, I served as President and am proud of the over \$500,000 raised while I was heading the organization. I served on the Executive Committee of the Center for Economic Progress from 2014 to 2018 helping over ten-thousand low-income clients get free assistance with income taxes and take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit. I have also previously served on the Night Ministry's Assocaite board and as an advisor for Rags of Honor.

I am married to Dana Sodikoff Ringer, an entrepreneur who has worked to help reduce the burden of student loan debt, provide quality health care for low income residents, and provide specialty transportation services for those needing health care. We met when Dana was the president of Women in Public Finance, a professional networking organization for women in the public finance industry, seeking to advance women's leadership opportunities by fostering relationships and providing educational activities.

We have 2 sons, Leo (age 3) and Henry (age 1). Leo attends Chalkboard Pre-School, an organization that threatened to close after 40 years in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. I'm proud to have organized the Chalkboard parents to help keep this valuable resource open for generations to come.

Education *

Undergraduate degree in Marketing and Consumer Behavior and a master's degree in Finance both from Tulane University.

Why should voters elect you and not your opponents?

I know how to get results. It's time we have a leader who prioritizes the interests and concerns of our community. We deserve to know our police, have predictable taxes, and have solutions when you call. I'll fight for small businesses and storefronts, better manage the roads and services we count on, and protect our character through the growth we desperately need. I've worked in and out of government, with businesses and Alderman and as a civic leader in our neighborhood. I'm a proactive leader, a consensus builder and I get results.

I am the only person running anywhere in the City who has delivered revenue without raising taxes, fines or fees. The digital billboards I brought in \$25 million of revenue in its first year and is on target to raise over \$200 million over the next 20 years. As the first chief of staff to the CFO of Chicago, I was uniquely situated between the Mayor's office and the Department of Finance, I spearheaded the creation of digital billboards on the expressway. Working with six departments, Alderman, our business partners, and the State of Illinois, my unique approach to problem solving helped make this idea a reality and a reliable new revenue stream.

Crime is a major issue in the 43rd ward and it's not going away on its own. It's time we have an alderman that tackles this issue head-on and produces meaningful results to keep our families safe. We need community policing back in our City. We need a leader that will have our officers' backs and make sure they have the resource they need to do their jobs. I believe in a data-driven approach, and I will demand

more police in our budget and that officers assigned here stay here so they are accountable to the community.

As an active, long-time resident of the neighborhood, I understand the constituent issues here because they are my issues, too. With the major challenges facing our ward and our city as whole, we need an alderman who can do more to advocate for our community in a proactive way. This is my dream job, I want to serve my community by fighting for our future together.

What do you see as the city's number one challenge in the next four years?

Simply put, growth. Our city cannot solve the problems it faces without attracting new talent and keeping the residents that are already here. Growth can only be accomplished by solving two things; Crime and taxes. This year marked the last installment, \$63 million, of the \$589 million property tax increase voted on by the City Council in 2016. There is more pain to come; The City owes an additional \$586 million annually to pension funds by 2022. At the same time, more officers are retiring than we are able to replace through hiring, and people don't feel safe in their communities, not just here, but in every part of the city. We need real community police back on or sidewalks and in our neighborhoods.

Our neighborhood has an opportunity for the type of growth that I envision right here in our backyard if we are mindful in our approach to the Lincoln Yards development. Lincoln Yards, is not a once in a generation project, it's a once in three. We need to be proactive in addressing issues of congestion, impact on neighborhood schools and protecting our community character including open spaces we deserve to ensure that Lincoln Yards is a positive development, not just for the current moment but for generations to come. That is why I have met with stakeholders and attended every meeting at every step of this project. Last fall, I was the only one to meet with Park District Head Micheal Kelley about incorporating green space into Lincoln Yards and the surrounding North Branch area, unlike anyone else including our current alderman. Final plans for North Branch must include ample green space and no stadium. Current infrastructure would be overtaxed with a stadium, but even proposed infrastructure could not handle events with 20,000 people. Even limited office space would be preferable to this. In addition, we need to take this opportunity to upgrade existing infrastructure including an east-west bridge at Armitage to access the expressway. I've been advocating for this for several years and I'm glad to see an Armitage bridge in recent proposals, but we need to ensure that it stays in the final proposal. Finally, we need funding and a commitment to include a neighborhood school, with CPS having a seat at the table.

Thoughtfully managed economic development and a true community policing strategy can transform the City back into a world-class destination. For that to happen, we need an alderman who will proactively work with constituents, community leaders, and business owners to achieve a balanced vision for growth.

Do you favor or oppose a city-owned casino in Chicago?

I support a City-owned casino as an option as long as there is appropriate oversight and transparency. I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility when it comes to new revenue streams including, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income, video gambling, municipal marketing and a commuter tax.

Do you favor or oppose electing Chicago's school board?

I support a hybrid board of elected and appointed members. Managing the schools is an essential responsibility of the Mayor, and City Council must hold the Mayor accountable for its results. Every school board member should be publicly vetted to assure there are no conflicts of interest and that the proper skill set is found in that board room and the full board should be accountable to review by the City Council.

How should CPS respond to shrinking enrollment?

As a father and parent of 2 boys, Leo (age 3) and Henry (age 1), I've already been active and engaged on this issue and I frequently attend Local School Council meetings. I should first note that while overall CPS enrollment has declined, the neighborhood schools in the 43rd ward are facing the opposite problem. Our schools are nearing capacity with enrollment increasing at 3% per year.

With the prospect of major development at Lincoln Yards, I'm concerned that there may not be the space for all of the children in my ward to go to their neighborhood school unless plans and funding are approved for more schools in this area. I think that local concerns like these get lost in the larger narrative around education policy in Chicago.

I believe that, regardless of whether a school stays open or closes, every child in Chicago should be able to attend a high-quality neighborhood school and that means local solutions to increasing or decreasing enrollment.

What is most important is that we have aldermen who are proactive in planning and forethought. I do not support the closing of schools for short-term budget gains that create long-term problems. We need a five-year plan to address local needs in every ward.

What's your game plan for reducing violent crime?

Crime is the number one issue I hear from people in my ward when I'm knocking doors. The problem we have now is a fundamental change in the sort of crime we're seeing in this neighborhood. What we're seeing today feels different because now it's a gun in your face and people are afraid to visit a neighbor after dark or even walk the dog in broad daylight.

We deserve safer neighborhoods and that means having more officers assigned to walk a beat. We need true community policing back in Chicago. In other wards, aldermen are fighting for more resources to address crime. Whenever officers are put in our district it is unclear how long they'll stay here. I believe we need more police and better training as part of a comprehensive strategy of true community policing with a data-driven approach. There's a major disconnect between our police and the communities they serve and CPD has even identified this is an issue that is hindering recruitment. We should be doing more to build that relationship.

As alderman, I will demand more police in our budget, make sure they have the resources they need to do their job, and that there is continuity in those assignments so that personnel assigned here are accountable to the community. I know my mail man, I know what sports teams he cheers for, my three year old son knows our street sweeper but we don't know our police. Simply put, we need more police walking a beat and playing a bigger role in our community. Beat cops, either plainclothes or in uniform, know when something is out of place and are in a better position to respond to crimes while they are happening and, more importantly, prevent it from happening in the first place. This real community

policing strategy will address major crimes and have the added benefit of making sure police are ready and available to address petty crimes like porch pirates and broken car windows.

We can also address major crime by going after the illegal guns that fuel it. We must start with the understanding that 60% of illegal guns recovered in Chicago come from outside Illinois and we will not be able to fully address this issue until national politicians step up to pass real gun control with a strong national background check system. Since we can't wait until that happens, in the meantime we need to act locally. I believe the best way to reduce the number illegal of guns is to focus on state legislation to regulate all gun dealers including requirements for training of employees to recognize illegal straw sales before they occur. Lastly, as a transit hub, we need more and better security at our train yards to ensure that legal cargo stays legal and doesn't flow into the black market.

We should do all of this and more and, as alderman, I will support creative solutions to protect our City from unscrupulous out-of-state gun sellers and traffickers. However, regulations alone won't end our problems with gun violence--we need to create job training and educational opportunities and support economic development to prevent individuals from becoming involved in crime before it escalates to firearms.

What's your strategy for dealing with the city's pension crisis?

In my time at the office of the Chief Financial Officer of the City I helped shine a spotlight on the unacceptable funding levels of our 4 pension funds and I understand this issue and the challenges we face. I worked with the first actuaries ever hired in the City of Chicago, unfortunately that was in 2011.

I strongly believe that the State – which passes pension laws that Chicago taxpayers must fund – should be part of the solution. The City Council does not control the Illinois State Constitution or pension laws directly. However, under the current constitution, the Supreme Court has been clear and unequivocal in the right of City pensioners to receive their benefits. Until and unless that changes, pensions are a clear fiscal debt that the City of Chicago must pay for. The only way out of this problem is to bring in new revenue.

I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility when it comes to new revenue streams including a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income, video gambling, municipal marketing and a commuter tax. One of my projects I spearheaded at the city was the creation of digital billboards on the expressway, which will raise more than 200 million dollars over 20 years. My unique approach to problem-solving helped the city to find this new and ongoing revenue stream without raising taxes, fines or fees. Including a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income video gambling, a commuter tax, and municipal marketing before we look at property taxes as a solution. I'd like to find more solutions like that before we look at property taxes as a last resort.

I will not support pension obligation bonds, which are false promises and not fiscally responsible. If the pension funds were to lose every cent of the pension obligation bond, tax payers of Chicago would still be on the hook to pay for these obligations. Furthermore, the claimed savings based on arbitrage is based on a rate of return set by the pension funds that has decreased in recent years and could fall even lower, thus eliminating all savings. See more on my position on pension obligation bonds here:

<https://www.ringer4results.com/node/33>

Should the use of TIFs continue or should they be phased out? Explain your reasoning.

Each TIF needs to be individually and continually evaluated. I believe we must manage TIFs thoughtfully and responsibly. They should only be used to spur growth, thereby creating revenue that would not have otherwise existed. All future TIFs should expire upon completion of the project rather than on an arbitrary timescale and current TIFs should be individually reviewed to determine their continued viability.

A good model of oversight and transparency in this type of review is the process we used when I helped evaluate the privatization of Midway Airport, which was considered in great detail and rejected. As part of that process, an oversight board including labor, City Council and independent community voices was tasked with reviewing every step of the process. That outside review board was also provided with its own independent budget with separate financial advisors and outside counsel. Every document was posted online for public consideration. Importantly, Chicagoans knew that the opportunity had been thoughtfully analyzed by City officials and reviewed by outside, independent experts. It represents a model for how all future contracts should be considered and I think this should be the basis for how we analyze and review TIFs.

How would you address the city's problems with lead in drinking water

I believe we should expand the Department of Water Managements' current residential lead testing program to better understand the size and scale of the problem, but we should not wait on full understanding to start solving it. We need a clear plan in place with deadline for replacement of all lead water mains. We should also incentivize homeowners to replace their pipes leading to the main while the streets are open for water main replacement, thus reducing the costs to homeowners.

If you believe Chicago needs new tax revenue, where do you think it should come from?

I believe Chicago needs new revenue, but I don't believe that it should be more property taxes. We need to find a way to finance City infrastructure projects, meet our debt obligations and support economic development without putting more strain on homeowners already struggling under recent tax increases. While I understand we need revenue to run the City of Chicago, I would only look to property taxes as a last resort.

When it comes to new revenue streams, I am a believer that we need to look at every possibility to find alternative revenue sources like the digital billboard project I spearheaded when I worked for the City. That project is projected to bring in 200 million dollars over 20 years without reaching deeper into the pockets of Chicago taxpayers. Some ideas for alternative revenue sources include a casino, recreational marijuana, taxing retirement income, video gambling, a commuter tax, and municipal marketing. I also believe that there are potentiation partial privatization deals that could lead to smart investment by the City. A public bank with strong public oversight could also be part of the solution by providing fair loans that would generate income for the City from their proceeds. As long as there are strong mechanisms for transparency and public oversight written into any legislation enabling a public bank, I think it could be a good idea.

City council must exercise strong public oversight to ensure that any revenue-generating proposals are considered transparently, and the final outcomes are in the best interests of the City and its residents. I think my understanding of City finances and the challenges ahead will be invaluable to appropriately evaluate future financial proposals. I will be a unifying voice in City Council, working with both new and

current aldermen to explore new sources of revenue and creative solutions for more efficient government.

What should the city council do to make itself more independent from the mayor's office?

This election is a historic moment in Chicago politics in that it will likely result in a majority freshman and second term City Council. With this new Council makeup and a new mayor, now is the opportunity to work to make changes to ensure a strong, independent, and transparent Council to better serve the city while protecting the individuality of each ward. I support a truly independent financial analyst and a fully funded Inspector General with the power to audit City Council operations and committees. The worker compensation committee should move to either the law or human resource department and be regularly audited. Finally, I support reducing the size of the City Council.

Rooting our operations in transparency and accountability will ensure that decisions are not made behind closed doors based upon murky conflicts of interest. For myself, I have pledged not to take any donations from any mayoral candidates or their PACs and I will always vote and act in the best interests of the residents of the 43rd ward.

What's the most pressing issue facing the people of your ward and how would you address it?

The people of my ward are most concerned with the increase in violent crime in our neighborhoods. I have a comprehensive plan to address this through data-driven community policing and supporting economic development in the 43rd ward and throughout the city.

The crux of this plan is having more police walking a beat in our neighborhoods. These need to be consistent personnel including a mix of uniformed and plainclothes officers because the deterrent effect of a uniformed officer is obvious but what happens when that patrolman turns the corner? Having a mix of uniformed and plainclothes officers means that potential criminals will have to think twice before they commit a crime because law enforcement is present but not glaringly obvious.

I have witnessed firsthand shop owners lose business in our neighborhood due to crime. This is a contributing factor to business licenses are down 20% over the last 8 years. We need to realign financial incentives, cut red tape, and manage City services to attract business back to the 43rd ward. We can't do that if crime is chasing business away when they locate here.

This needs to stop and it won't until we have an alderman who will fight for our community. I don't think I have all of the answers, but I am willing to work to hear every voice that wants to be heard and represent them.