



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Owura-Kwaku Sarkodieh

Office Sought: Mayor/Councilor At-Large

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### (A) Your Candidacy

#### 1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

- Supporting parity within the Worcester Public schools
- Supporting smart development and judicious use of taxes
- Bringing City Hall down to the street level

#### 2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I'm feel qualified to hold the office of Mayor/Councilor At-Large because I understand the real challenges facing our City, not just from a political standpoint, but from my lived experience. I've lived in Worcester for over a quarter century. I've worked at UMass for 10 years. I've taught briefly in the Worcester Public Schools. As a realtor and a homeowner, I've worked directly with residents, small business owners, and community organizations, solving problems and building coalitions. My background in law and criminal justice have given me a broader insight into community policing and using smart leadership to keep the City safe and running efficiently.

Worcester has been run by the same faces and ideas for over a decade. That's enough. I'm not here to maintain the status quo. I'm here to retail Worcester City Hall. I want to make city hall more accessible, transparent, efficient and accountable to all the seven hills in Worcester. I'm bringing fresh energy, but with a clear, practical vision that comes from listening to people and working

side by side with them. With these clear cut goals, I feel extremely qualified to hold the office in city hall.

**3. What is the one policy you've seen pioneered in another city that you'd most like to adopt locally?**

**Participatory Budgeting:** In cities like New York and Seattle, residents directly decide how to spend the city's budget. The residents participate in how their tax revenue are used to fund projects like park upgrades, street safety improvements, or public art. Residents tend to trust the system because they have a say in exactly where their tax dollars go to. It also increases civic engagement because residents do actually take part in the budgeting process.

**(B) Open-Ended Policy Questions**

**1. Given state law, municipalities in Massachusetts are limited in their taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue to support essential city services?**

**Expanding the tax base:** The city can make it faster and easier for small businesses to open, which will in turn create jobs and increase the tax revenue. The city can also focus on attracting creative industries which pay strong commercial taxes.

**Smarter use of city assets:** The city can begin charging vacancy fee on long-vacant commercial buildings to encourage development while generating revenue.

**Issuing bonds:** The city can issue bonds for sustainable projects thereby creating revenue to support essential city services.

**Revenue from tourism and special events:** The city can add small fees to large-ticket events at sports arenas, festivals and/or concerts.

**2. What are your top priorities for ensuring that all students in your city can receive a high-quality public education?**

**Full funding:** I would advocate that budgets for schools meet or exceed the state's Student Opportunity Act requirements, ensuring every school has the qualified and motivated teachers, counselors and support staff it needs.

**Supporting Teachers and Staff:** I strongly support higher pay increases for teachers and massive incentives which include professional development to attract qualified teachers and staff.

**Addressing Opportunity Gaps:** I would work to expand access to early childhood education that's city subsidized, especially in underserved neighborhoods.

**Safety in and around the schools:** I would work on implementing anti-bullying programs and culturally-sensitive teaching. This will include random searches for guns and ammunition in and around the school zones.

### **3. What can your city do to help protect immigrant communities under attack from ICE and ensure genuine community safety?**

Know your rights trainings in targeted areas

Public assurances from local officials about their support for the rights of all residents.

Limiting data-sharing and access to municipal data systems; This can be done by requiring warrants or court orders before turning over personally identifiable information.

Formalize policies that schools, hospitals, places of worship and city service offices are sensitive locations ICE enforcement actions should not be supported by city staff.

### **4. What are your top three policy priorities for making your city climate-resilient, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?**

1. Municipal solar and renewable projects: The city can give incentives to homeowners who go solar. The city can lead the effort by installing solar on public buildings, schools and parking lots.

2. I would also promote zero-emission on all city vehicles. This will be mandated in all city contracts such that anyone vying for contracts would be required to show their zero-emission strategy.

3. I would also work on public education that encourages tree planting, maintaining gardens, and installing efficiency upgrades. This could be done through partnering with schools to integrate climate literacy and green career training into the curriculum.

**5. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of city residents to safely get around by walking, biking, or public transit?**

I would advocate for safer streets which will include cleared and well-lit sidewalks in every community, enforcing pedestrian crossing laws, and enforcing the neighborhood speed limits.

Like in most big cities, I would include protected bike lanes and parking near schools, workplaces and transit stops.

Since there is low ridership on the WRTA, I will propose a legislation which would give tax breaks (reduction in excise taxes) for WRTA ridership.

I would also work on public education that promotes walking, and biking. This can be done through schools or public campaigns.

**6. What policies will you advocate for to ensure that your city can be a place that is affordable for residents to live at any stage of life?**

I will encourage the building of duplexes, triplexes and small apartment buildings in more neighborhoods to provide moderately priced options for families and seniors. This will offset the effect of rising rent due to shortages.

I will also support anti-displacement measures that will provide legal aid and rental assistance to prevent evictions, especially during economic downturns.

Most importantly, I will support property tax relief for seniors and low income homeowners.

I will also work to expand childcare support by partnering with nonprofits and schools to create affordable childcare options so families can work and study.

With newer developments coming to Worcester, I will support the creation of affordable housing trust fund which will be financed through developer contributions and federal/state funds.

**7. [If relevant] How would you assess your city's MBTA Communities Act rezoning efforts so far?**

Official reports from City Hall indicate that the city's existing zoning already complies with the Act's requirements. It is undisputed that three-family houses are a staple of the Worcester community.

**8. What strategies would you employ to resist federal overreach from the Trump Administration while protecting critical services and funding for residents?**

As a mayor/councilor at-large, I would stand firm in defending our community's rights and values while using smart, strategic approaches to protect essential services and funding.

**Legal and Legislative Advocacy:**

I will support resolutions that assert local authority and pushback against unjust and inhumane overreaching federal mandates, especially those that threaten civil rights, local control or environmental protections. At the same time, I'll work with state and regional partners to strengthen or legal standing when challenging harmful policies.

**Community mobilization and Transparency:**

I will keep residents informed about how federal actions affect our city, and I'll work closely with grassroots organizations, advocacy groups, and other municipalities to coordinate responses.

**9. How would you model transparency and accountability if elected?**

I would model by making government more open, accessible and responsive to the people. This starts with open and frank communication. I will regularly update residents on key decisions, budgets and initiatives through town halls, newsletters, social media, and an open-door policy.

I support council meeting being recorded and archived I will also push for plain-language summaries of complex policies so everyone can understand what's being proposed and how it impacts them.

Accountability means being honest about progress and setbacks. I will publicly share my votes and the reasons behind them, and invite community feedback even when it's tough. I believe elected officials work for the people – and that means answering to the people at every step.

**(C) Yes/No Policy Questions**

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES/ NO**
2. Do you support the creation of an unarmed, community-based emergency response program, separate from the Police Department, to respond to mental and behavioral health crises? **YES/ NO**

3. If your community has not already, do you support adopting the new specialized stretch code, which would require new construction and major renovations to be built to a very high-efficiency standard with all-electric (as opposed to fossil fuel) heating and cooling systems? **YES/ NO**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES / NO**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES / NO**
6. Would you support a home rule petition to establish a small transfer fee on high-end real estate transactions to create dedicated funding for affordable housing production and preservation? **YES / NO**
7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES / NO**
8. According to the American Library Association, in 2022 there were at least 45 attempts to restrict access to books in MA schools, disproportionately books that speak to the experiences of LGBTQ students and students of color. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES / NO**

**(D) Additional Comments**

*(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)*