



WNC for Change Asheville City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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1. What types of development do you think are appropriate for downtown Asheville? What types are inappropriate? Explain.

I believe that downtown is the heart of Asheville. Downtown sets the tone for our economic viability, and sets the tone for our community. I personally depend on a thriving downtown in my law practice in that I represent businesses and individuals who locate to Asheville due, in part, to the economic and cultural hub that is our downtown. But, looking forward, it is important to preserve our quality of life as we navigate the pressures of growth. We need to emphasize what makes us unique: locally owned businesses, our downtown festivals and music events like shin-dig on the green, our strong arts community, our beautiful, unique and historic architecture. This is our community, and it is what we need to preserve.

It is against this backdrop that Asheville must strive for a balanced approach that maintains the goal of preserving our quality of life. This approach must not erode what makes us unique – our community. Now is the time to rewrite and retool Asheville's development standards and add components that include green building, affordable housing, public parking and public spaces, height restrictions, and so on. At the same time, these new standards should include objectivity rather than the current subjective criteria administered by Council on an inconsistent and ad hoc basis.

2. How would you improve Asheville's Homeless plan and service system?

Asheville's Homeless Plan or plan to end homelessness, adopted in January of 2005, seeks to end homelessness in Asheville by the year 2015. It is apparent, by my unscientific measure of the homeless population in Asheville, that an increase has occurred since 2005 rather than a decrease. The plan calls for increased affordable housing and the provision of other services. However, I would like to see increased health care and mental health services injected into this program. It is well known that our jails serve as a temporary holding area for the homeless who often suffer from mental health issues. For whatever reason, over the years, funding for mental health services and continuous, rather than the current sporadic, care has been reduced and/or eliminated. Without heavy emphasis on the importance of this element in eradicating homelessness, I fear that many will continue through the revolving door of arrest, jail, and homelessness.

3. What initiatives would you undertake to make Asheville a greener city?

Asheville is already working to make itself a greener city by changing the way it manages City buildings and its motor fleet. In fact, the City has hired an employee whose sole task is to ensure this continuous green movement throughout City infrastructure. This effort should continue. The City can also start to require a green building component of new projects. As I stated above, as our City ordinances are retooled, for example under the Downtown Master Plan, green building standards can be incorporated into these regulations. Again, I would incentivize developers into supporting these requirements by allowing them, in exchange, to go through an objective approval process rather than the current subjective process. In other words, should a developer comply with all of the new potential standards (height restrictions, green building standards, a certain percentage of affordable housing, and so on), in return, the developer would be permitted to do their project without having to go through the current subjective review process. The citizens must decide, under this scenario, what they desire in the way of development restrictions, up front, rather than on a case by case basis which treats applicants unequally and inconsistently.

4. Do you support a living wage for all city employees including contract labor? Domestic partner benefits?

Yes and Yes.

5. What are the three best City Council achievements of the past four years?

The City has adopted several comprehensive plans regarding transit, downtown, and greenways, to name a few. This is a good first step, but now these plans need to be seen through to fruition. In addition, the City has made a policy shift to conserve energy by making their building greener and by bringing in low-emission hybrid buses. The City has recently embraced the concept of a nuisance court to manage the issues unique to downtown. The City has also focused on the issue of affordable housing. It is difficult to say which the best achievement is since many of these projects are ongoing, but I am supportive of the direction and would like to see these projects furthered, in some cases, and completed, in others.

6. List and explain three of your priorities for City Council during the upcoming four years.

Preserving a Community for All Ages.

The quality of life we value in Asheville depends on protecting and nurturing a community for all ages, a place where we can raise our children and also retire, a place where we can take real ownership of our neighborhoods, bike to work, walk to the store, or enjoy an afternoon at the park with the grandchildren. This means fostering a community of genuine interaction among generations, accommodating a wide diversity of needs, and removing hurdles to accessibility and civic engagement.

Fighting for Appropriate and Sustainable Growth.

Moving to Asheville in 1988, I recall a beautiful and laid back mountain town that was just beginning to discover its unique potential. Since then, I have watched, with some uncertainty, as Asheville has attracted new kinds of development and emerged as one of our nation's most desirable places to live. This growth has strained our community and infrastructure, and too often the City has played catch-up with planning tools designed for simpler times. Antiquated development ordinances, a crumbling water system and other inadequate infrastructure were not designed for this kind of growth. Now is our chance to get ahead of the next wave of growth: to fill in the gaps, and make sure that future development is measured against fair, consistent, and thorough rules that match and reinforce the goals of our neighborhoods and our businesses.

Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility.

My time as a legislative attorney and my experience interacting with our City government has taught me the central importance of fiscal stewardship. No budget item should be taken for granted, and redundant or overlapping costs ought to be aggressively eradicated. Regressive taxes should not be favored, rather, the City should continue to move toward a fee-based revenue structure.

7. What sets you apart from the other City Council candidates? Explain.

I think this is a question to be answered by the constituents. I have tried to provide any and all information about me personally, professionally and politically so voters can make an informed choice in the upcoming election. What I might think sets me apart, may or may not be relevant to the next person.

8. If elected, how would you engage the citizenry of Asheville in helping to make decisions and accomplishing your goals?

I will seek public input on all matters before City Council through the public hearing process, through work sessions and stake holder meetings, and through direct dialogue. I believe City Council members should be accessible by phone, mail, email, and, of course, direct discourse.

9. Do you support President Obama's agenda, including his energy, health care and education initiatives? Explain why or why not.

Yes, I support President Obama's energy, health care and education initiatives.

On energy, President Obama seeks to replace our current energy dependence with alternative renewable energy choices. During my four years with the State legislature, I staffed the Study Commission on the Future of Electric Service in North Carolina. This educational experience not only taught me the nuances of the status quo and the influence yielded by the current power industry, but also about the hurdles that need to be overcome to revamp the power industry. The federal government, from a funding

and regulatory standpoint, plays a large role in this future revamping, but each and every citizen can make a change as well by demanding green energy resources. This change is needed not only to reduce dependence on foreign oil sources, but, first and foremost, rolling back the damage done to our environment.

On health care, I whole-heartedly support President Obama's efforts to overhaul our healthcare insurance system. I was a proponent of this idea during the Clinton administration and was saddened to see it fail then. My concern now is that President Obama will be forced to water down this reform through months of negotiations on a comprehensive bill. Meaningful legislation must be adopted and not a flimsy substitute that does not bring real benefit to anyone.

On education, and with regard to President Obama's education initiatives, I am interested in seeing No Child Left Behind reformed. My husband is a school teacher at Enka High School and two of my three children attend Jones Elementary School. I have listened to teachers complain that under-performing schools are punished rather than supported, yet the judging criteria is arbitrary and especially difficult for schools with larger minority populations and special needs students. As to the other aspects of President Obama's education proposals, the best suggestion is to improve pre-school education by enhancing and expanding headstart. Children are greatly impacted by their early years and providing a healthy, supportive and educational environment will allow them to thrive.

10. Who are the five largest contributors to your campaign and how much did each contribute.

The most amount of money I have received from any supporter is \$500 and those that contributed that amount are as follows:

Carolyn Coward
Anna Mills
Ronald Manheimer and Gail Ashley-Smith
Roy Davis
Albert Sneed
Jerry Sternberg
Michelle Rippon
Larry McDevitt