



WNC for Change Questionnaire  
For 2009 Asheville City Council Election

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*Preface: Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to answer this questionnaire despite the fact that I am not an "official" candidate but am engaged in a write-in for the office. I know this is highly unusual and wanted to take a few minutes of your time to talk about the special circumstances and opportunities that this situation affords.*

*First, many of you know that I made a decision not to run for Council during an extremely trying personal time. The death of my father and the final dissolution of my 21 year marriage were both events of such impact and import to me and my children that I felt that I had to give us all the focus, time and attention to support our passage through this time. Grief, I have discovered, is not something one can go around, but must go through. I know that I did the right thing to temporarily remove myself from the stress of the campaigning process so that we could go through this time together. I am happy to say that my children and I are more settled and accepting of the path that life has led us upon and I am ready to get on with my life's work.*

*In 2007 the citizens of Asheville overwhelmingly supported a referendum to keep Asheville City Elections NON PARTISAN. This framework allows different voting rights than do PARTISAN elections. A write in vote in a non partisan election is a valid process by which the voter may cast a vote for someone not printed on the ballot. While I will not be allowed to participate in the primary, votes in the general election will be counted.*

*I chose to undertake a write in candidacy after much encouragement from community members asking me to reconsider my decision made earlier. I have received incredible support over the summer, and recognized that my grief stricken feelings of being redundant were in fact not an opinion shared by my community. Every day I am contacted by people excited about my reentering the race and offering their support and assistance. We are building a strong team and will be prepared to come into strong action after the primary. There are additional values to being a write-in candidate, as I learned from my previous success as a write-in to the Woodfin Water Board: increased voter engagement and excitement for the electoral process and a strong dose of political capital to the ideas of that candidate. I know that re-entering the campaign for the Asheville City Council will bring additional attention and engagement with our Municipal elections this year.*

*Thank you for allowing me this additional time to preface the questionnaire. I am extremely excited about the opportunity to continue to serve my community and will work hard to be successful at this campaign. I believe we can do it. I have received innumerable letters and wishes of support from this community and I look forward to working with you all in service to our shared future.*

*Robin Cape*

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

*In 2006 Council support the implementation of a Downtown Master Planning Process. I was a strong champion of this effort because I believe that we have to plan TOGETHER ahead of the growth. I am impressed with the excellent work done by this community over the past two years in the downtown Master planning process as it is an example of the type of engaged community participation that WNC for change advocates. Over 10,000 community hours were documented as citizens engaged with their ideas about what the future of downtown Asheville could be. I am very supportive of this type of community engagement and will offer some of their recommendations for appropriate downtown development as the types of development I believe to be important for downtown.*

- a) Maintain an eclectic mix of creative, innovative businesses and employment opportunities*
- b) Build on the strong and divers arts community*
- c) Encourage Mixed use development*
- d) Balance the needs of tourists and residents*
- e) Increase opportunities for a diversity of races, ethnicities, ages and income levels*
- f) Seek new opportunities for community gathering spaces*
- g) Create neighborhood centers within a network of parks, service and transportation option*
- h) Build housing that suits a variety of household incomes, sizes, ages and lifestyles*
- i) Invest underutilized land to build greater density and increase tax base*
- j) Continue to protect landmark buildings and views to and from the mountain setting*
- k) Support adaptive reuse of buildings*
- l) Encourage high quality, compatible design for all new buildings*
- m) Provide incentives to spur green development and energy efficient retrofitting*

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

*We have had a great opportunity to see that the 10 Year Plan to End Homeless Plan can be successful by the results of the efforts thus far. Unfortunately, once again, the state has reduced the money to support Pathways to Permanent Housing and other programs that place the chronically homeless in case managed permanent housing. This reduction in funding has put at risk some of the very successes our community has had. I support the City's continuation of this program and continuing to channel a good portion of the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding we receive from HUD in to programs that are a part of this plan. . I supported the City's move to bring the program into the City administration in an effort to strengthen its effectiveness and have seen the improvements this has offered the program. I also voted to accept the ARRA (American Recovery and Restoration Act) Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program Grants and this \$509,460 will be distributed over the next three years to a collaboration of local groups to keep more people from slipping into homelessness. This is a crucial program in these challenging economic times.*

*Another aspect of preventing homelessness is to create and support affordable housing in this region. As a Housing and Community Development committee member since 2005 I have helped support the development of affordable housing through administration of the Housing Trust Fund, CDBG and HOME funding and policy development. I have been involved with working with City's Community Development staff to move the Affordable Housing Plan (AHP) toward implementation and have participated in state wide studies on this issue ( via the NC school of government affordable housing study). I think the basic tenets of the AHP of 2008 are good and support the implementation of:*

- a) increased use of underutilized or vacant land*
- b) an aggressive campaign to help people understand just what affordable housing is and isn't to overcome community barriers and increase available areas for affordable housing opportunities*
- c) collaborations for ensuring that our community members utilize the underutilized earned income tax credit to increase their income*
- d) development of Employer assisted Housing Opportunities*
- e) Increased Affordable Rental Stock*
- f) Use of city owned land for Affordable housing opportunities*

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

- a) *I have been actively engaged in the development of development incentives for green and energy efficient retrofits and would continue to work on these to make sure that more green building is actually encourage within the City of Asheville*
- b) *I would support the further development and implementation of the greenways, bikeways, pedestrian plans to decrease Vehicle Miles Traveled*
- c) *I would encourage the City to train their building inspectors in the HERS rating system to improve the building quality of new and remodeled construction projects*
- d) *Continue to press the state for the opportunity to create an energy loan fund at the city to support renewable energy and energy efficient upgrades to residential and commercial buildings. These funds would be payable as assessments on property tax and rapidly increase the installation of these technologies.*
- e) *I have designed a program through my vice-chairmanship of the AshevilleHub's Asheville/Buncombe Sustainable Community Council (ABSCC) that is called **Reading, Riding and Retrofit** and is a comprehensive program to green the Buncombe county school systems as a model for community sustainable development. I participated in a joint grant development with Land Of Sky Regional Council for a \$500K grant to EPA's climate showcase communities, and a \$25K grant from the county for project development. This grant was just awarded and we will be moving forward with this program this fall.*
- f) *As a founding member of the Applied Solutions Coalition I would continue collaborating with other cities nationally on a federal project for funding integrated solutions ( act local to affect global climate change)*
- g) *I would continue to support the development of a Sustainable Action Plan for Buncombe county through my role as vice chair of the ABSCC*
- h) *I will continue to encourage a reevaluation of the Standards and Specifications manual to create GREEN options for street, sidewalk and other infrastructure*
- i) *I would support a resolution to encourage the city of Asheville to participation in Climate Adaptation Planning*
- j) *I would continue my work to support Green Business Development in WNC*
- k) *Through my role on the Community Energy Advisory Council I would continue to stall Progress Energy on building a peak power plant until commercially viable technologies are available for their use and press them for Energy Efficiency programs and support to reduce our regional power usage.*

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

*Yes to both answers.*

*First, affordability is a crucial issue in our local economy. We can not address this issue by simply subsidizing those who do not "make enough money." I believe a just society is one that pays a fair and honorable wage for work done, removing the shame and stress of low income jobs and strengthening the economic vitality of the community as a whole. We will pay the same costs one way or another, either in increased stress on our environment as we drive*

*people further and further out in the county to be able to live and force them to commute to these low wage jobs or by increasing the financial subsidies in housing, health, food, etc.*

*As per the domestic partner benefits I believe there is no "bottom line" at which it is fair to discriminate and that documented domestic partners should be afforded the benefits that all partners receive.*

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

*It is hard to choose because I feel like we did a lot of good things, but here are 3 of my favorites:*

- a) *The Sustainable Management Plan for the city of Asheville [http://www.ashevillenc.gov/docs/sustainability/Asheville\\_Sustainability\\_Plan\\_draft\\_04-29-09.pdf](http://www.ashevillenc.gov/docs/sustainability/Asheville_Sustainability_Plan_draft_04-29-09.pdf) is a terrific piece of policy that will affect the overall direction and performance of City operations for years. I am proud to say that my work in championing the development of the SACEE (Sustainability Advisory Committee for Energy and the Environment) has led to many improvements in city operations including offsetting the expenditure of \$65,000 on energy this past year, the creation of a sustainability division in the department of the City Manager that will this year increase staffing from 1- 4 people. This plan supports the 2% annual energy conservation reduction goal that we established in 2006.*
- b) *The Downtown Master Plan was an excellent example of community engagement on planning and development for downtown and will have positive long term impacts on this community, offering a guideline for the future development of our crucial downtown.*
- c) *Preservation of the 30 acres for Beaucatcher Overlook Park in Downtown Asheville an accomplishment that included the partnering of the City and County and private citizens. The purchase of this 30 acre natural park was finalized this year. I was the champion for this project and overcame initial council and commissioner resistance to this idea to gain a 12-0 vote in its favor. This park will be a preserved natural area in downtown that allows the city to experience the wonders of our natural environment without driving out of town.*

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

- a) *Implementation of green and affordable building incentives and development improvements: Green building incentives can go a long way to encouraging builders, remodelers, etc to increase the quality of construction. I wish to create a variety of incentives that will encourage a rapid change to our building stock, reducing the stress that poor construction has on our environment*
- b) *Enhancements to the alternative transportation options of the community. We need to increase the options for biking, walking, and riding alternative transportation. I would like to explore how the city might support entrepreneurial alternative transportation options like car shares, bike shares, small shuttles to support the transit system, etc.*
- c) *Expansion of opportunities for affordable and local business development in the area much in the way we support affordable housing. As the area grows we will find*

*pressures from outside businesses may increase in our thriving downtown area. NC laws to not allow cities to restrict chain businesses and we need to get creative about how we can support and encourage more local businesses.*

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

*In my 4 years of service I have matured as a council member and can offer a jump start to political process for the newly elected members of Council. I had to learn the hard way without much support and as a natural collaborator I understand the value of bringing the new members up to speed as rapidly as possible. I am a natural networker and bridge maker and have been successful in building coalitions of support for various initiatives within different factions in this community. I have built strong relationships with a variety of organizations and am a candidate who has gained support from progressives, moderates and even compassionate conservatives. I have a strong relationship with sustainability and environmental advocacy groups, and as an active board member of the Hub Alliance have positioned the City of Asheville as an integral partner in the local/regional economic development discussions.*

*I have played a supportive role in the advancement of the economic opportunities of the emerging Climate Services Industry and have a good understanding of how that new industry is developing here. It is useful to have a council member with a working understanding of the local and regional sustainability challenges and opportunities in these rapidly developing discussions with the Federal Government concerning the transfer of Climate Service to this area.*

*I have been an advocate for energy and sustainability issues for over 30 years, living off grid in the 1980's, living an alternative lifestyle on both rural and suburban homesteads, currently experiencing what is like to live within the urban core of Asheville. I have been an entrepreneur and operated one of Asheville's first green businesses Preservation Hall Architectural Salvage in downtown Asheville for 9 years. From this experience I learned the challenges for small businesses doing business downtown. I understand the value and profitability of the green economy and can speak from a first hand knowledge. I am a performing artist and musician, and support the vibrancy of our artistic culture, understanding the specific challenges of that important economic and social system. I am a mother and understand the importance of education, the health of our school systems and opportunities for our children and their future. I am a good public speaker and can represent this community well in a variety of venues.*

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

*I will continue my website and email newsletters and participating in community events, forums, etc. I will continue to target information to people who I know are particularly interested in the issues that are coming before council to encourage their engagement with council on those issues prior to the vote as I did in the Greenway discussion where the*

*response from the community was instrumental in changing the direction of the final council decision. I am considering having an intern to accompany me to meetings and events and report to the public on the various projects that I am working on. I welcome any other ideas that people have that would enhance the engagement with the citizenry.*

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

*Yes, I think that his stated agenda on health care and education are beneficial directions for our country to move toward a more secure and sustainable future. I believe that a healthy society is one that considers the needs of the whole over the needs of the few. The common good of a foundation of energy security, health care for all and education for a stronger future, will build the strength upon which we will overcome our Country's greatest challenges. A citizenry who does not have to struggle with the basic needs of life will be one that can engage with the democratic process more easily, will find hope in a future they can build upon and be less forced to engage in activities that harm the overall good of the country. (crime, drugs, etc)*

*While I am excited that finally a president has addressed our energy issues in such an apparent and targeted manner, I do not support his agenda on coal and nuclear power as the primary sources for our energy security. I believe that an enhanced focus on research technologies and a restructuring of the energy subsidies to support renewable development will be to our country's long term advantage. We depend on the federal government to set the direction and I encourage them to enhance efforts in these directions.*

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

*Julie Montanae \$100.*

*Mary Miller Stair \$50.*

*Robert Zimmerman \$1500 in-kind donation*

*Robin Cape \$100*

*Mack Pearsall \$100.*