

ANNA ALBI

Candidate for City Council – Responses

- 1. What motivated you to run for council/re-election, what parts of your professional and personal experience qualifies you to serve, and what measurable outcomes should voters hold you accountable for if you are elected?**

My focus in office continues to be addressing gun violence, which means making sure residents in all 52 neighborhoods are paid enough to afford a roof over their head, food on their table, and access to healthcare.

And while we are making progress ([as of 9/5/2025](#), shootings citywide are [down](#) ~19% and violent crime citywide is [down](#) 2.7% year-over-year), it's clear residents in our most vulnerable neighborhoods are still struggling to meet their basic needs. There is a perception of increased crime, especially downtown. I want to be clear: We did see some major issues in early summer, and City Council, along with the Mayor and the City Administration, took multiple steps to address the crime spike in early June and are continuing to invest heavily in making sure our City is a safe place to live, work, and play.

Entering office last year, I immediately jumped in to address the issue of food insecurity. Often when I am in rooms discussing gun violence, the conversation comes back to “our kids are hungry, we don’t have a grocery store.” This connection between chronic hunger and violence is obvious when you look at the data: Over 70% of our gunshot survivors entering our hospital-based violence intervention program are suffering from food insecurity. And while on average 21.5% of our City is food insecure, the rate of food insecurity is 2-3x higher in our neighborhoods struggling most with gun violence. That’s why I’m proud to have led the charge to unlock over \$1 million in funding for food access in our most violent neighborhoods. This work absolutely would not have happened without me on Council, and I look forward to continuing it, especially as changes to SNAP and increased costs at the grocery store due to Trump’s tariffs hit our most vulnerable residents.

- 2. Last year the Cincinnati Futures Commission released its report containing recommendations that chart a fiscally sustainable path forward for the City and develop a community-informed economic agenda for the future.**
 - a. How would you accelerate the implementation of the Futures Commission, and which specific recommendations do you believe are the top priority for the City?**

I believe creating an updated land use plan and increasing administrative efficiency needs to be our top priority. I believe if we can proactively identify

land that we can develop into housing and clear the way to make it as easy as possible to build, that would be a major step towards addressing our housing crisis.

b. Do you support the creation of the Office of Strategic Growth?

Yes

c. Are there recommendations you believe the City should not pursue?

I do not believe we should sell Water Works.

3. The City's budget is constrained, with major obligations to the pension, public safety, and infrastructure. Please describe your budget priorities, including where you believe the City can save money and where the City should grow its spending. What tradeoffs would you be willing to make to fund your key priorities?

My top budget priorities will always be community violence intervention, food access, and human services because I believe that is the work we need to do to make our city truly safe—we will not police our way out of public safety concerns.

With that said, I'm surprised how being on City Council has really brought out the urbanist in me. I have always considered myself a "city person," but I think 40 years from now, I will be proud to tell my grandkids I was part of funding major projects like the Carew Tower and Saks building conversions, the new OTR community center, the new convention center (though perhaps that will need another update in 40 years!) and legalizing middle housing in vital areas across the city.

4. Do you support an increase in the City's earning tax in the next Council term? If yes, how much would you increase it and what would you utilize the revenue for?

As the Future Commission report notes on p. 13: "Cincinnatians are burdened with high taxes and fees." Over the past year, I have become increasingly concerned about the tax burden on our low-income and elderly residents, especially after property taxes increased so drastically with the most recent assessment.

If City Council were to propose an income tax, we must truly understand the possible ramifications. Unfortunately, the State of Ohio prevents us from being able to implement a progressive income tax that would allow us to ensure top-earners paid their fair share without over-burdening low-income residents.

I am happy to discuss my thoughts more during my in-person interview.

5. The City has a number of external partners like REDI Cincinnati, The Port, CincyTech, Cintrifuse, 3CDC and others that help it achieve its growth goals.

a. Do you support continuing to provide funding to these organizations?

Yes.

b. Do you support continuing to fund the Affordable Housing Leverage Fund with the City's waterfall?

Yes.

c. What actions would you take to support job growth and site development?

I support increased funding for Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Homebase, and expanding the voluntary tax incentive contribution agreement (VTICA) program so more abatement recipients pay the 7.5% allocated to the Affordable Housing Fund and the 7.5% for the community fund. Additionally, I continue to be supportive of incentives for housing developments on a project-by-project basis.

6. Do you believe Cincinnati needs to grow? If so, what do you believe is Cincinnati's greatest opportunity for growth and what tools should City Council provide to make it successful?

I want more neighbors! And I want my new (and existing) neighbors to have somewhere to live! Housing costs in the City are rising way too high, way too quickly. We need more housing at all income levels across our entire city. This is why I'm proud to have voted in favor of changing our outdated, racist zoning code to make it legal to build middle housing along our rapid transit bus routes and in our business districts. As part of City Council, I remain committed to our partnership with the Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) and directing them to fund more income-restricted projects.

I am proud Cincinnati is the fastest growing region in Ohio*, with higher employment levels and higher gross domestic product compared to Cleveland and Columbus. I expect that trend to continue, especially with the investments Council is making around job creation and major developments like the convention center and hotel and the Macy's and Carew Tower conversion projects. These are truly transformational projects and they cannot happen without incentives from the City. I am fully in support of these incentives, especially with the trade-off of developers making PILOT payments to Cincinnati Public Schools and paying VTICA to support the streetcar.

*I want to note that the State of the Region report highlights the importance of immigration to this growth, and unfortunately, the Trump Administration's hostile policies

make our continued growth hard to sustain. We are already seeing small businesses losing revenue and workers because of ICE. I believe anyone who truly believes in growing our city needs to be loud and proud about supporting our immigrant residents.

- 7. Connected Communities was passed to increase housing supply through zoning reform. Do you support this policy? What additional zoning or land use changes, if any, would you support to add new housing in Cincinnati?**

I believe one of our greatest accomplishments this term was passing Connected Communities to legalize building middle housing along what will be our rapid bus transit lines and in our neighborhood business districts. I support changing restrictive zoning and expanding form-based codes such as height, setback, minimum lot size, floor-area-ratio, and density, to allow more and easier housing production.

- 8. In 2021 the Chamber released *Embracing Growth*, which laid out a number of policy recommendations. Since then, Council has considered a number of policies to increase housing supply.**

- a. What specific actions should Council take to expand housing of all kinds across the City?**

I believe we should look to expand form-based code and introduce pattern books to speed up approvals. I also believe we should legalize middle housing (especially duplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and cottage courts) in every single neighborhood, beyond the BRT lines and business districts. That type of gentle density needs to be universally accessible.

- b. Would you restore the residential tax abatement program if presented with evidence that housing production has slowed?**

The evidence would have to be overwhelming and compelling..

- c. What role do you believe that TIF districts should play in advancing the City's growth agenda? How do you think TIF funds should be utilized? What role should City Council play in prioritizing their use?**

I support how TIF districts are currently being used to fund development and pedestrian safety.

- d. How would you improve the city's permitting and development process?**

I think we need to clarify and standardize the process for community engagement for development, specifically with community councils. I believe we need to increase

resources for neighborhood plans so we can engage residents to think more broadly about how they'd like to see their neighborhoods grow over time. Right now, because so many neighborhood plans are decades old, every development becomes a potential battleground for what certain residents want their neighborhood to look like. If we could update and maintain more relevant neighborhood plans, then perhaps the City could move approvals more quickly if a proposed development aligns with the neighborhood plan.

Additionally, I believe form-based code and pattern books could help accelerate the process.

Beyond that, I am open to ideas!

- 9. A number of development projects and policies in the last Council term have sparked debate over density, affordability, and neighborhood character. What responsibility does City Council have to advance pro-growth housing policy when individuals, advocates, or neighborhood organizations oppose specific projects, and how should Council weigh the importance of population growth and citywide housing needs against localized opposition?**

I believe we need to shift towards more frequent neighborhood plans to be able to front-load community input. I often say I expect residents to be able to articulate desires for their neighborhood such as, "We want more housing for low-income residents" – I don't expect the average resident to be an expert on zoning code or tax incentives. And yet that's exactly what we're asking of our volunteer community council members. I believe residents should be able to set the vision in a neighborhood plan and then we as a City Council, working in partnership with the private sector, should then work to achieve that vision.

- 10. The Chamber believes economic incentives have been essential to Cincinnati's growth. What role do incentives play in Cincinnati's future growth, and which types of projects do you think most warrant increased incentives?**

Like I mentioned above, projects like the convention center and hotel and the Macy's and Carew Tower conversion projects are exactly the types of projects that most warrant increased incentives. These projects are made possible through City Council's support, and lead to growth in our city.

- 11. Cincinnati's economy depends on attracting and retaining talent. What role should City Council play in ensuring we grow a skilled workforce and remain attractive to young professionals and families?**

As a Council, we have continually made major investments into economic and workforce development through our Human Services funding, Leveraged Support, and other grants for community partners. I fully support continuing these investments. Additionally, we have created opportunities in the City through Career Pathways and our Cincinnati Recreation Commission Youth to Work program, and more. Personally, I'd like to see our Career Pathways expand to include more departments across the City and increase the connection with CPS.

We are privileged to have so many amazing companies in our region that attract talent. While it's exciting to have big companies such as P&G and Kroger in our backyard, it's important to recognize how our investments in fields such as the arts and urban agriculture also create jobs. Furthermore, the Building Futures program is building a pathway into the middle class for those who have historically been excluded from the trades.

Finally, City Council can further grow and retain talent by funding and expediting more housing and fostering a safe and entertaining downtown.

12. Violent crime, quality of life issues, and residents' perception of safety are all pressing concerns in Cincinnati. What short- and long-term strategies or policies would you champion to improve actual safety and strengthen the community's sense of security, especially in the urban core? How would you measure success in both areas?

I spend the majority of my time focused on fostering safe communities. I want to be clear: To me, a safe community is NOT one where we have the National Guard rolling down our streets. A safe community is one where everyone is paid enough to afford a roof over their head, food on the table, and access to healthcare. That is why I believe firmly in a "yes, and" approach to tackling gun violence and broader public safety initiatives.

On September 8, we voted in the Budget Committee to allocate an additional \$5.4 million in funding for a variety of safety measures, including additional police visibility, increased cameras and lighting, community cleanup and youth outreach.

I want to highlight that while shootings are down just shy of 20% year-over-year and violent crime rate is a little below or about what it was last year citywide, we have seen a sharp increase in property crime in the Central Business District and Over-the-Rhine. That is why I continue to push my colleagues and the Administration to provide funding for crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) measures such as cameras, lights, and landscaping. Simply put: built and natural environments can have a major impact in reducing crime and enhancing individuals' sense of safety.

As the lead for the Secure Firearm Storage Action Team under ACT for Cincy, I am working with the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD), the Department of Public Services, and community partners to specifically address the issue of guns being stolen out of cars. We are taking a multi-pronged approach: 1) The City is updating its parking lot/garage

licensing requirements to increase safety requirements; 2) CPD is reintroducing a grading system to evaluate the safety of parking lots/garages to educate drivers on the safest places to park; and 3) My office is working with CPD to distribute gun lockboxes designed for cars during major events to give gun owners an on-the-spot solution to secure their firearms.

Unfortunately, because Ohio has an extremist majority in the State Legislature that passes some of the most dangerous gun laws in the country, guns are everywhere. Furthermore, that same State Legislature prevents local municipalities from passing our own gun safety measures, which means we have to focus on promoting voluntary actions and addressing systemic issues in order to address gun violence. I am proud to have worked with CPD, the Hamilton County Sheriff and the public library to offer free gun locks in every library in the county, and we've had over 430 individuals request gun locks at the library thanks to this program. This is a model I've had multiple lawmakers across the country reach out to me to ask how to replicate locally.

I also worked with CPD to offer free, out-of-home gun storage for up to six months. This program provides responsible gun owners a safe place to store their firearm if they need to get it out of their house for any reason, including if a family member is experiencing a mental health crisis or if they don't want kids to hurt themselves or others. While the State of Ohio does not have an emergency risk protection order, also known as a "red flag" law, this out-of-home gun storage program provides a voluntary and potentially life-saving option for responsible gun owners who want to keep their loved ones safe.

Finally, we know helping residents meet their basic needs is an important part of public safety. While we talk a lot about supporting housing (from rental assistance to access to counsel to emergency shelters), I have led the charge to address food insecurity in our city. Sadly, in Cincinnati, the average food insecurity rate is 21.5%; however, in neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence, the rate can be 2-3 times higher. Additionally, over 70% of our gunshot survivors entering our hospital-based violence intervention program are screening for food insecurity. Addressing chronic hunger is vital to ensuring our residents, especially our kids, are able to grow and thrive, that's why I'm proud to have championed over \$1 million in funding for food access in our neighborhoods hit hardest by gun violence.

13. What is one concrete way you would engage business leaders to improve public safety outcomes, and how would you ensure accountability?

Addressing public safety requires a multifaceted approach that goes well beyond police visibility. I would encourage any and all business leaders to attend our ACT for Cincy monthly meetings to engage with the work the City is doing. I think their voices would be extremely valuable as we consider how we can bring the "thriving neighborhoods" pillar of ACT for Cincy to life.

14. Cincinnati's small businesses are the lifeblood of neighborhood business districts. How would you support long time and new small business entrepreneurs?

I support maintaining and possibly expanding our Neighborhood Business District Improvement Program. Unlike many of the City's other grants, NBDIP is judged by peers and is voted upon democratically, which I find truly special.

15. What is one existing barrier to growing small, minority, or women-owned businesses in Cincinnati, and what is the City's role in removing that barrier?

In the coming months and years, I'm worried about how hostile federal and state policies will inhibit our ability as a city government to support Minority Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises. Already, we as a Council are having conversations with the Administration about how we need to adjust participation goals to highlight Small Business Enterprises because it's unclear whether providing assistance to minority businesses would be challenged in court.

I remain personally committed to our inclusion goals and supporting programs like the Women of Color: Access to Capital Bootcamp the City hosted with the Urban League.

16. The City funds arts, cultural institutions, and major events in different ways. Which types of cultural or tourism investments do you believe should be prioritized, and how would you pay for them?

Cincinnati is an arts town! Not only do we have a world-class arts scene that enhances our culture, we know the arts generated a \$1.6 billion economic impact between 2019 and 2022—a number I expect to continue to grow over time!

On September 8, I introduced a motion aimed at possibly restoring the Arts Capital Fund that previously existed. I've observed during my time at City Hall that many of the big capital asks are coming from our arts partners as they aim to either build new spaces or enhance their existing ones, but there is no clear process for how to assist them with these needs. Personally, I'd like to see the Arts Capital Fund brought back and potentially funded as part of the final "bucket" in the waterfall for capital expenses; however, I know this is something I will need to consult my colleagues about once we have the report back from the Administration.

At the end of the day, I believe we owe it to our arts partners to provide a clear pathway to seek financial assistance for capital projects, especially since we know the amazing cultural and economic impact the arts have on our city.

17. Solving major policy challenges, delivering efficient public services, and funding critical infrastructure projects requires the City to work with county, regional, state and federal leaders, some of whom are from different political parties. How will you engage these leaders to support the City's needs?

I believe that true systems change can only happen through collaboration. Over the past year and a half, I have continuously engaged with state, county, and school board officials, as well as our judges, to discuss vital issues. And earlier this year, while attending the National League of Cities conference, I had a chance to meet with both our US Senators where I asked them for their continued support for funding the Brent Spence Bridge and Western Hills Viaduct.

During my in-person interview, I'd be happy to share a public safety initiative that I am working on with Cincinnati Public Schools, Hamilton County, Juvenile Court, and Jobs and Families Services.

Because at the end of the day, my priority is making Cincinnati the safest and most compelling place for folks to live, work and play, and I will gladly collaborate with anybody who shares that mission.