

REGIONAL CHAMBER 2025 COUNCIL QUESTIONS

LAKETA COLE

1. Motivation & Accountability

I am running for Council because I believe every neighborhood in Cincinnati deserves safety, opportunity, and a voice in shaping our future. My service as a former Councilmember and current Vice President of the Bond Hill Community Council has given me a unique perspective on how policy connects—or fails to connect—with people's daily lives. I've been on the ground addressing gun violence, advocating for youth, and working to strengthen neighborhood business districts.

Voters should hold me accountable for measurable outcomes:

- Expanding neighborhood access to city resources.
- Reducing gun violence through evidence-based prevention programs.
- Driving equitable development so long-time residents benefit from growth.
- Strengthening transparency and trust in Council decisions.

2. Futures Commission

a. I support accelerating the Futures Commission's recommendations by prioritizing fiscal sustainability, workforce development, and neighborhood-centered growth. My top priority is creating equitable pathways for job training and retention.

b. Yes, I support establishing an Office of Strategic Growth if it ensures accountability, measurable outcomes, and equity.

c. I do not support selling water works.

3. Budget Priorities

My priorities are public safety, infrastructure, and youth development. We can save money by improving efficiency in permitting, cutting duplicative contracts, and leveraging partnerships. We must increase investment in housing, infrastructure upgrades, and community-based violence prevention. I am prepared to shift incentive dollars toward projects that deliver real community benefits.

4. Earnings Tax

Yes I would support raising the City's earnings tax based on what was proposed in the futures report. Cincinnati should grow its tax base by attracting new residents and businesses.

5. External Partners & Housing Fund

a. Yes, I support continued funding for external partners when outcomes are transparent and inclusive.

b. Yes, I support maintaining the Affordable Housing Leverage Fund through the waterfall.

c. I will push for site-ready land, stronger partnerships with neighborhood councils, and job growth strategies that benefit local residents.

6. Growth Strategy

Yes, Cincinnati must grow. Our greatest opportunity is retaining young families and professionals while creating opportunities for longtime residents. The tools are targeted housing investments, workforce training, and transparent incentives tied directly to job creation and inclusive development.

7. Connected Communities

I did not support Connected Communities as passed. While I agree zoning reform is needed, the process must better balance housing supply with neighborhood input. I would support reforms that activate vacant lots, encourage workforce housing, and align density with infrastructure and transit capacity. I support form-based zoning which allows for more flexibility in land use but provides controls on building size, shape, placement, and how it interacts with public space. It prioritizes design and the relationship of buildings to the sidewalks, and each other.

8. Housing Expansion

- a. Unlock city-owned land, streamline permitting, and incentivize affordable and workforce housing.
- b. Yes, I would restore the residential tax abatement program if evidence shows housing production slows.
- c. TIF districts should fund infrastructure and housing in underserved neighborhoods. Council must set equity-based priorities.
- d. The development process must be faster, transparent, and customer-friendly with clear timelines and accountability. It must reduce all the red tape and be a true online process, from filling the form out, submitting it, and have a tracking mechanism to see where your application is in the process. Additionally, the mindset and culture must change to how can we make this project work, this is what “we can do”.

9. Density & Neighborhood Opposition

Council must lead on citywide housing needs but also respect neighborhood voices. Growth is essential, but projects must come with community engagement, infrastructure, and affordability to ensure that residents benefit rather than being displaced. If elected I would work to bring everyone to the table to collaborate and work towards a compromise.

10. Incentives

Incentives should be focused on projects that create jobs, affordable housing, and neighborhood revitalization. They must generate measurable returns for residents, not just developers.

11. Workforce & Talent

Council should expand career pathways, youth employment programs, and childcare access. We must partner with unions, employers, and educational institutions to grow a skilled workforce and keep Cincinnati attractive for young families.

12. Public Safety

Short-term: Expand violence interruption programs, improve lighting and neighborhood safety measures, and build stronger police-community trust.

Long-term: Address root causes—poverty, trauma, lack of opportunity—through youth programming and economic mobility.

Success measures: Lower violent crime rates, expanded prevention program participation, and improved community surveys of safety.

13. Business & Safety

I would engage business leaders through partnerships to fund youth jobs, community spaces, and safety infrastructure. Accountability would come from public reporting of investments and outcomes.

14. Supporting Small Business

I totally agree that small businesses are the lifeblood, which is why I created the neighborhood business district support fund when I was on council 15 years ago and it continues to work. I will champion resources for technical assistance, access to capital, and simpler permitting. I will also expand city contracting opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses.

15. Removing Barriers

Access to capital remains the greatest barrier for small, minority, and women-owned businesses. The City must expand loan funds, seed grants, and reduce red tape. Additionally, the city must change how they define WBEs.

16. Cultural & Tourism Investments

I would prioritize investments in festivals, arts programming, and cultural spaces that both enrich communities and drive tourism. These can be funded through city dollars, philanthropy, and tourism-generated revenue.

17. Regional, State, & Federal Collaboration

I have always believed in building bridges across political lines. I will work with leaders at every level to secure funding for infrastructure, public safety, and workforce development. Collaboration is the only way Cincinnati can thrive.