

Cincinnati Regional Chamber – 2025 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Dawn Johnson

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?

I'm running because it's the Dawn of a New Day in Cincinnati. As a lifelong resident, mom, small business owner, and NANA President, I've led coalitions that turn plans into results.

Accountability metrics:

- Safer streets: expand PIVOT with quarterly public scorecards; fewer shootings in targeted grids; faster response downtown and in NBDs.
- Youth empowerment: double paid youth opportunities, launch a Citywide Youth Council, and track 90-day retention in jobs/apprenticeships. Youth incubators. Build pipelines to become entrepreneurs after school.
- Civic development: replace Connected Communities with Pathway Communities—homeownership-first, design standards, and enforceable community benefits.
- Community wellness: Bereavement & Maternal Health supports, produce delivery scale-up, and a City-supported Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) advocacy to allow hot food EBT for eligible seniors, unhoused, and disabled residents.

2. Cincinnati Futures Commission

- a) Acceleration & priorities: Implement site-readiness, digitize permits with hard SLAs, and align incentives to workforce housing + NBD infrastructure.
- b) Office of Strategic Growth: Yes—stand up a Neighborhood Deals Desk (no net new headcount) to coordinate TIF, land, permitting, and employer deals.
- c) Not to pursue: Any item that cuts human services without offsetting reinvestment. The Human Services Fund (≈1.5% GF) must stay targeted to outcomes.

3. The City's budget is constrained. What are your priorities, savings, and tradeoffs?

- Grow: public safety staffing/tech in PIVOT zones; behavioral-health co-response; youth opportunities; housing & NBD infrastructure.
- Save: consolidate duplicative admin; require ROI on incentives; expand e-permitting (CAGIS ezTrak now live).
- Tradeoffs: reprogram portions of HSF toward trauma recovery, youth opportunities, and food access (Produce Perks + RMP advocacy).

4. Do you support an increase in the City's earnings tax?

No. Raising the earnings tax burdens working families. We must grow the tax base by supporting small businesses, attracting tech and green industries, and retaining talent.

5. External partners & tools

- a) Continue funding REDI, The Port, CincyTech, Cintrifuse, 3CDC: Yes, with project scorecards (jobs, MWBE spend, NBD impact).
 - b) Affordable Housing Leverage Fund (waterfall): Yes.
 - c) Job growth/site development: dedicate TIF to streetscapes/utility upgrades; pre-permit city-owned sites; expand incubators for tech/green and neighborhood entrepreneurs.
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6. Do you believe Cincinnati needs to grow?

Yes. Our biggest lever is housing + talent retention. Tools: Pathway Communities (ownership + design), concierge permitting for small developers, hybrid/4-day-week pilots with employers, and targeted incentives.

7. Housing policy & land use

- a) Connected Communities: I will replace it with Pathway Communities—balancing gentle density with homeownership, design standards, and enforceable community benefits.
 - b) Expand housing: adaptive reuse, ADUs, missing-middle near transit, plus affordability covenants in incentive deals.
 - c) Restore residential tax abatement if production slows? Yes, with equity guardrails.
 - d) TIF's role: prioritize NBD infrastructure + mixed-income projects tied to local hiring; Council sets public criteria.
 - e) Improve permitting: digital submittals (built on ezTrak), SLAs, and a concierge lane for homeowners/small builders.
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8. Density vs. neighborhood character

Council must advance pro-growth policy and earn buy-in: early design charrettes, published impact analyses, and community benefit agreements so growth strengthens—not displaces—neighbors.

9. Incentives

Use incentives where they unlock workforce housing, innovation hubs, green buildings, and vacant corridor reuse. Each deal carries outcome KPIs and clawbacks.

10. Workforce & talent retention

Focus on housing near jobs, childcare access, mobility, and youth-to-career pathways with unions, employers, and universities (tech, logistics, healthcare, construction).

11. Public safety

Short-term: expand PIVOT, target lighting/cameras/clean-ups, and grow Ambassador coverage from downtown to key NBDs with BID-style matches.

Long-term: scale Hope & Shield (hospital-based violence intervention) with teen-focused aftercare and school partnerships; add trauma-recovery access points.

Measuring success: shootings down in PIVOT grids, faster service calls in NBDs, improved business/resident safety surveys.

12. Business engagement on safety

Create a quarterly Safety & Cleanliness Compact with employers/merchants: pooled funding for Ambassadors, lighting, and data dashboards; publish outcomes each quarter.

13. Small business support

Incubate and unstick: micro-grants, façade + fit-out support, and a one-page permit path via the concierge lane; commit to 15-day city pay for small/MWBE contractors.

14. Barrier for small/minority/women-owned firms

Capital + contracting access. Expand loan guarantees with local CDFIs; publish quarterly procurement dashboards; enforce prompt-pay and unbundle contracts.

15. Arts & culture

Back neighborhood festivals and anchor institutions that drive tourism and foot traffic; braid funding from sponsorships, hotel/motel revenue, and philanthropic matches.

16. Intergovernmental collaboration

Form bipartisan compacts with county/state/federal partners for transit, housing, and public safety grants—tying asks to clear performance metrics.