

KEVIN FARMER

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 Business Partner Rosemary Oglesby, and her coaching. The lack of transparency and laziness with our current administration.

My activism in the community, and affairs. And My community Oversight in politics and the go My involvement in several local legislation. From Protesting and registering people to vote.

My Actions

answer

My business partner, Rosemary Oglesby, has played a pivotal role in my development through her leadership and coaching. Her support has helped shape my strategic approach to both business and community engagement.

At the same time, I remain deeply concerned about the current administration's ongoing lack of transparency and evident complacency. These issues hinder progress and erode public trust. I actively work to restore both through consistent advocacy.

I have long been engaged in community activism and civic affairs, with a focus on oversight in political and governmental sectors. My work includes contributing to local legislation, organizing and participating in protests, and spearheading voter registration initiatives.

These actions reflect my unwavering commitment to justice, equity, and accountability. I believe in not just talking about change but being the change.

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?

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

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

answer

The Cincinnati Futures Commission laid out a clear vision for a stronger, more financially stable city. I am fully committed to turning those recommendations into real action that delivers results for our communities.

a. My Priorities and Plan for Action

To move these ideas forward, we must act with urgency and transparency. As a leader, I will push for clear timelines, strong accountability, and community input every step of the way.

My top priorities from the report are:

- Balancing the City's budget without putting the burden on working families
- Investing in neighborhood development, job training, and small businesses
- Holding City departments accountable with performance tracking and public reporting

This is about making city government work better and making sure it works for everyone.

b. Supporting the Office of Strategic Growth

Yes, I support the creation of the Office of Strategic Growth. With the right leadership and community involvement, this office can help drive smart, inclusive growth and bring new energy to how we plan for the future.

c. What I Will Not Support

I will not support any recommendation that threatens essential public services or cuts critical programs for our most vulnerable residents. Fiscal responsibility must go hand in hand with compassion and equity.

I am running to bring transparency, accountability, and real solutions to City Hall. The Futures Commission gives us the blueprint. Now let us get to work.

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?

Answer

Cincinnati's budget challenges are real. With major obligations to pensions, public safety, and infrastructure, we must be both responsible and bold in how we allocate resources. As

a leader, my budget priorities are rooted in equity, efficiency, and long-term impact.

My Key Budget Priorities

Investing in Communities

We must prioritize neighborhood revitalization, affordable housing, youth programs, and workforce development. These are the investments that strengthen families and reduce long-term costs related to poverty, crime, and health disparities.

Public Safety with Accountability

Public safety is essential, but it must be community-centered. I support funding for first responders while also investing in violence prevention, mental health response teams, and community-based programs that address root causes of crime.

Modern Infrastructure and Clean Transit

We must maintain and modernize our roads, transit, and public spaces in ways that are sustainable and accessible. Infrastructure spending should be tied to job creation and local hiring wherever possible.

Where the City Can Save

- Conducting audits of existing contracts and expenditures to eliminate waste and inefficiency
- Streamlining administrative operations to reduce overhead and redirect funds to frontline services
- Leveraging partnerships with nonprofits, educational institutions, and businesses to expand impact without increasing costs

Smart Tradeoffs for Long-Term Gains

I am willing to make responsible tradeoffs to fund what matters most. This includes

- Delaying nonessential capital projects in favor of urgent investments in housing and public safety
- Reevaluating tax incentives that do not produce measurable community benefits
- Redirecting funds from underperforming programs into solutions that deliver results for more residents

My commitment is to prioritize people, protect essential services, and build a budget that reflects our shared values and long-term goals.

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?

answer

I believe any conversation about increasing the City's earnings tax must be approached with caution, transparency, and a commitment to equity. Right now, families and small businesses are facing rising costs across the board. Before considering any increase in the earnings tax, the City must first demonstrate that it is being a responsible steward of the resources it already has.

That means identifying waste, improving efficiency, and ensuring that existing dollars are going toward the most urgent needs. We also need to fully explore alternative revenue streams such as stronger partnerships, updated fee structures, and better enforcement of current tax obligations.

If after a thorough and community-informed analysis an earnings tax increase becomes necessary, I would only support it if the following conditions are met:

- The increase is modest and does not disproportionately impact low and middle income residents
- The new revenue is clearly dedicated to essential services such as affordable housing, public safety reform, youth programs, and infrastructure improvements
- There is a public accountability system in place to track how every dollar is spent

At this time, I am not calling for an immediate increase in the earnings tax. However, I am open to community led conversations about sustainable, long term funding solutions that reflect our shared priorities and values.

My focus will always be on protecting essential services, investing in neighborhoods, and ensuring fairness in how we raise and spend public funds.

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?
 - b. Do you support continuing to fund the Affordable Housing Leverage Fund with the City's waterfall?
 - c. What actions would you take to support job growth and site development?

answer

I support continuing funding for key external partners such as REDI Cincinnati, The Port, CincyTech, Cintrifuse, and 3CDC, provided that their work is transparent, accountable, and directly benefits our community. These organizations play an important role in driving economic development, fostering innovation, and attracting investment. However, I

believe funding must be regularly reviewed to ensure it aligns with the City's priorities and delivers measurable outcomes for all neighborhoods.

b. Affordable Housing Leverage Fund

I strongly support continuing to fund the Affordable Housing Leverage Fund through the City's waterfall mechanism. Affordable housing is a critical issue in Cincinnati and investing in this fund helps create more housing options for families and individuals who are priced out of the market. Stable housing is foundational to thriving communities and economic opportunity.

c. Actions to Support Job Growth and Site Development

To encourage job growth and site development, I would prioritize:

- Streamlining the permitting and approval process to make it easier and faster for businesses to grow and develop sites
- Supporting workforce development programs that connect residents with good paying jobs especially in growing industries like technology, healthcare, and clean energy
- Fostering public private partnerships that leverage City resources with private investment to revitalize commercial corridors and industrial sites
- Ensuring economic development benefits reach historically underserved neighborhoods through targeted investments and inclusive hiring practices

My goal is to create an environment where businesses can thrive while ensuring that growth is equitable and benefits all Cincinnati residents.

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?

answer

Yes, I firmly believe Cincinnati needs to grow. Growth is essential to creating more opportunities for our residents, improving quality of life, and building a stronger economy that works for everyone.

I believe Cincinnati's greatest opportunity for growth lies in leveraging our unique strengths. These include our diverse neighborhoods, rich cultural heritage, growing technology and innovation sectors, and strategic location as a transportation and logistics hub. By investing in these areas, we can attract new businesses, retain talent, and ensure our city remains competitive and vibrant.

To support this growth, City Council should provide tools that include smart and flexible zoning policies that encourage mixed use development and affordable housing. Incentives for businesses that create good paying jobs and invest in local communities are also essential. Strengthening workforce development programs to prepare residents for emerging industries will help build a skilled workforce. Supporting infrastructure improvements that connect neighborhoods and enhance transit options is critical. Finally, promoting public engagement and partnerships will help ensure growth benefits are shared equitably across all communities.

Growth must be inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with the values of equity and opportunity. I am committed to working with City Council and the community to make this vision a reality.

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?

answer

I support the Connected Communities policy as an important step toward increasing housing supply through thoughtful zoning reform. Addressing Cincinnati's housing shortage requires bold action to create more diverse and affordable housing options across our neighborhoods.

In addition to Connected Communities, I would support further zoning and land use changes that encourage:

- Increased density in appropriate areas to allow for more multi-family housing
- Flexibility for accessory dwelling units to provide affordable rental options
- Streamlining the approval process for new developments to reduce unnecessary delays
- Encouraging mixed use developments that combine housing with retail and services
- Protecting existing affordable housing while incentivizing new construction in underserved communities

My goal is to create a housing landscape that meets the needs of all Cincinnati residents, promotes equity, and supports sustainable growth. I believe that expanding housing options is essential to keeping our city vibrant and affordable for everyone.

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?

- b. Would you restore the residential tax abatement program if presented with evidence that housing production has slowed?
- 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?
- d. How would you improve the city's permitting and development process?

answer

Actions to Expand Housing Across the City

City Council should take a comprehensive approach to increase housing supply by supporting policies that encourage diverse housing types, including affordable units, multi-family developments, and accessory dwelling units. This includes zoning reforms that allow for higher density where appropriate, incentivizing affordable housing construction, and protecting existing affordable housing stock. Council should also invest in infrastructure and services that support growing neighborhoods to ensure sustainable development.

b. Residential Tax Abatement Program

If presented with clear evidence that housing production has slowed, I would consider restoring the residential tax abatement program as a tool to incentivize development. However, any decision to restore or modify the program must be tied to transparency, clear goals for affordability, and community benefits to ensure it serves the public interest.

c. Role of TIF Districts in Growth

Tax Increment Financing districts should be used strategically to support projects that promote economic development, job creation, and neighborhood revitalization. TIF funds should be utilized for infrastructure improvements, public amenities, and affordable housing initiatives that might not otherwise be financially feasible. City Council must play a strong role in prioritizing TIF use by setting clear guidelines, ensuring transparency, and involving the community in decision making.

d. Improving Permitting and Development Processes

To improve the city's permitting and development process, I would advocate for streamlining approvals, reducing bureaucratic delays, and increasing staff capacity to handle permits efficiently. Implementing better technology for application tracking and communication can help make the process more transparent for developers and residents alike. Additionally, maintaining regular community engagement throughout development projects is essential to address concerns early and build trust.

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?

answer

City Council has a critical responsibility to advance housing policies that support sustainable growth, affordability, and the long-term health of Cincinnati. While it is important to listen carefully to individuals, advocates, and neighborhood organizations, Council must also consider the broader needs of the entire city.

Population growth and the urgent need for more affordable housing are essential to the city's economic vitality and quality of life. At times, this means making difficult decisions that prioritize citywide benefits over localized opposition. However, this process must be transparent, inclusive, and respectful.

City Council should actively engage with communities early and often to understand their concerns and incorporate their input where possible. Effective communication, compromise, and thoughtful planning can help balance neighborhood character with the need for increased density and new housing options.

Ultimately, Council's role is to lead with a vision that ensures Cincinnati grows in a way that is equitable, sustainable, and meets the needs of all residents.

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?

answer

Economic incentives have played a significant role in supporting Cincinnati's growth by attracting businesses, encouraging investment, and fostering job creation. Moving forward, incentives should continue to be a strategic tool, but they must be carefully targeted to ensure that public resources generate real and equitable benefits for our communities.

I believe incentives should prioritize projects that:

- Create good paying jobs with opportunities for local hiring and workforce development
- Support affordable housing and mixed-use developments that contribute to neighborhood revitalization
- Promote innovation and growth in emerging industries such as technology, clean energy, and healthcare
- Invest in underserved communities to reduce economic disparities and expand

opportunities

Transparency and accountability must be at the core of any incentive program. City Council should regularly evaluate the impact of incentives to ensure they deliver measurable returns for Cincinnati residents and do not simply subsidize projects that would happen without public support.

By using incentives wisely, Cincinnati can encourage responsible growth that benefits all residents and strengthens our local economy.

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?

answer

City Council plays a vital role in creating an environment where Cincinnati can attract and retain skilled workers, young professionals, and families. To do this, Council must focus on policies that support education, workforce development, affordable housing, and quality of life.

Investing in partnerships with local schools, colleges, and training programs is essential to prepare our residents for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Council should also support initiatives that promote career pathways in growing industries and ensure equitable access to these opportunities.

Creating vibrant, safe, and inclusive neighborhoods with access to amenities, green spaces, and reliable transit makes Cincinnati more attractive to young professionals and families looking to build their futures here.

Finally, City Council should encourage collaboration between the public and private sectors to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and a diverse economy that offers fulfilling career options.

By prioritizing these areas, Council can help build a skilled workforce and ensure Cincinnati remains a place where talent wants to live, work, and thrive.

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?

answer

Violent crime and quality of life concerns are urgent issues in Cincinnati, especially in the urban core. To address these challenges, I would champion a combination of short-term and long-term strategies focused on both improving actual safety and strengthening residents' sense of security.

Short-term strategies include increasing community policing efforts to build trust between law enforcement and residents, expanding mental health and crisis intervention teams, and improving lighting and public spaces to deter crime. Additionally, supporting programs that provide immediate assistance to victims and at-risk youth can help prevent cycles of violence.

Long-term strategies focus on addressing root causes of crime through investments in education, workforce development, affordable housing, and youth engagement programs. Creating economic opportunities and safe spaces will help reduce violence and improve overall community well-being.

To measure success, I would track data such as reductions in violent crime rates and emergency calls, as well as conduct regular community surveys to gauge residents' feelings of safety and trust in law enforcement. Transparency and accountability in reporting these metrics will be key to maintaining public confidence.

By combining practical interventions with community-driven solutions, we can make Cincinnati safer and create neighborhoods where all residents feel secure and valued.

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

answer

One concrete way I would engage business leaders to improve public safety is by establishing a Public Safety Partnership Council. This council would bring together business owners, law enforcement, community organizations, and city officials to collaborate on identifying local safety challenges and developing targeted solutions.

To ensure accountability, the council would have regular meetings with transparent reporting on progress and outcomes. Metrics such as crime reduction in commercial areas, business community feedback, and improvements in public space safety would be tracked and shared publicly.

By fostering open communication and joint responsibility, we can create safer environments that benefit businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

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

answer

Cincinnati's small businesses are essential to the vitality and character of our neighborhoods. To support both long-time and new entrepreneurs, I would focus on creating an environment where they can thrive and grow.

This includes advocating for simplified permitting and licensing processes to reduce barriers, expanding access to affordable commercial spaces, and promoting local procurement to keep dollars circulating within our community. I would also support providing small business owners with resources such as business development workshops, mentorship programs, and access to capital through grants and low-interest loans.

Building strong partnerships between the City, business associations, and community organizations will help ensure entrepreneurs receive the support they need to succeed. My goal is to nurture a diverse and resilient small business ecosystem that reflects the unique character of Cincinnati's neighborhoods.

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?

answer

One significant barrier for small, minority, and women-owned businesses in Cincinnati is limited access to affordable capital and resources needed to start and grow their enterprises. This challenge often makes it difficult for these businesses to compete on a level playing field.

The City's role is to actively remove this barrier by expanding funding opportunities such as grants and low-interest loans specifically targeted to underserved entrepreneurs. Additionally, the City should invest in tailored business development programs, mentorship, and networking opportunities to help these businesses navigate regulatory processes and access new markets.

By prioritizing equity in economic development efforts, the City can foster a more inclusive business environment that empowers all entrepreneurs to succeed and contribute to Cincinnati's growth.

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?

answer

Cincinnati's arts, cultural institutions, and major events are vital to our city's identity, economy, and quality of life. I believe we should prioritize investments that promote accessibility, celebrate our diverse communities, and attract visitors who contribute to local businesses.

This means supporting programs that increase participation in the arts across all neighborhoods, investing in cultural events that highlight our city's rich heritage, and enhancing tourism initiatives that create sustainable economic impact.

To pay for these investments, I would advocate for a balanced approach that includes leveraging public-private partnerships, seeking grants, and exploring targeted revenue sources such as tourism-related fees. It is important that these investments are made transparently and deliver clear benefits to residents and visitors alike.

By prioritizing inclusive and impactful cultural initiatives, Cincinnati can strengthen its reputation as a vibrant and welcoming 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?

answer

Solving Cincinnati's major policy challenges and funding critical projects requires strong collaboration with county, regional, state, and federal leaders, regardless of party affiliation. I believe in building respectful, solution-focused relationships that prioritize the needs of our city over political differences.

I will engage these leaders by actively seeking common ground, maintaining open lines of communication, and advocating consistently for Cincinnati's priorities. This includes participating in regional coalitions, attending intergovernmental meetings, and working to align City goals with broader initiatives.

By fostering partnerships based on mutual respect and shared objectives, we can secure the resources and support necessary to deliver efficient public services and invest in infrastructure that benefits all Cincinnati residents.