

Answers to Survey by Vice Mayor Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney

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?

Bringing more equity to our underserved communities

- Opened the Office of Opportunity

Decreasing gun violence

- Pushing for community violence interruption strategies such as Advance Peace that has significantly decreased gun violence in cities across the country

Creating pathways out of poverty

- Bringing programs such as Building Futures to Cincinnati

Providing more opportunities for youth

- Pushing for more jobs and mentorships through our Cincinnati Recreation Center's Youth2Work Program, partnerships for mentorships with community groups and non-profits such as the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

Increasing affordable housing and especially homeownership

- Providing ongoing educational workshops and conferences; making sure we have funding to overcome barriers such as downpayment assistance

Helping our small businesses

- Funding and coaching for small businesses such as the Grow Avondale Fund Program

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?

- Support for our businesses
- Development of vacant land: more housing
- Prep of vacant sites for manufacturing and other job creation plans

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

- Let's talk more about it. We have an Department of Community and Economic Development that is to promote strategic growth.

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

- I am against privatizing GCWW and our golf courses

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?

We waste money on political optics. Rather than fund jobs for youth, we just allocated \$880,000 so people can be walked to their cars. We just allocated \$360,000 for license plate readers to locate stolen cars. I am shaking my head.

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?

I would consider it, as long as we stay the lowest tax rate in Ohio. I agree with the futures Commission on using the funds for small business growth and housing.

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?

That's a loaded question. Funding yes, but not without looking at equity. Who is benefitting? Are we helping our underserved communities or are we seeing the same high poverty rate that we've had for years?

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

Absolutely yes.

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

I mentioned a few above: Small business growth, programs such Building Futures

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?

Yes, of course, we need to grow! Let's open up the clubhouse and give more women and people of color a chance to participate in the development/construction fields. We appreciate the support for the Build Cincy Conference coming up Sept. 18-19.

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 voted no because while Connected Communities is on the right path, it was passed quickly without looking at issues such as affordable housing, environmental concerns, neighborhood look and feel, and accessibility.

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?

- Convert vacant buildings into housing
- Consider making a certain percentage of affordable units mandatory in projects with more than 50 housing units
- Fund affordable housing programs such as Habitat for Humanity and help them locate large tracts of land owned by the City/held in the Land Bank that could be used for affordable homeownership

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

- Yes. We have a 3-tiered tax abatement program for residential housing.

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?

TIFs provide resources to make developments affordable. The problem is with neighborhoods that do not have access to TIFs due to historic underdevelopment.

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

Streamline it. There's too much back and forth. For example, today, a developer told me he went to get a permit and was told he had to do a soil study first. He did so and the soil study was fine. So he went back for the permit. Now, he's been told he needs a CSR. Now his project will be delayed into the spring. Why not give him all of the requirements and a timeline up front?

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?**

Stop pitting developers and community councils against each other. Create a process whereby developers share their concept with the community early in the process and get support for it. Waiting until there's been heavy investment is too late. Check out how the Walnut Hills Neighborhood Council WH Business Association, and CDC do it!

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?**

- Our Dept. of Community and Economic Development looks at the project's capital stack and determines the need for incentives
- In addition, City Council has created a policy that incentivizes our priorities such as multi-family housing especially along transit corridors, affordability, environmental sustainability, etc.

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?**

- We sponsored and promoted JobsOhio/Redi's Forbes 30 Under 30 Week to attract young talent to Cincinnati
- We have a robust start-up culture and resources
- We sponsor tech conferences such as MidwestCon and Black Tech Week

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?**

- Real change is more than the optics of more police. We need jobs for youth, training for adults, and programs such as Building Futures – a 12-week pre-apprenticeship program that helps individuals from underserved communities prepare to enter good, union-paying jobs in the Building Trades

- We also need community violence interruption: Programs like Advance Peace deal with the active shooters, the small group of individuals wreaking most of the havoc in our neighborhoods. This program changes lives.

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

I am meeting with the CRBC to discuss funding more jobs for youth, and to discuss funding for Advance Peace.

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

- Businesses in the Avondale Town Center are struggling, so LISC has developed a support program that helps current businesses to expand, and encourages new businesses to move into the Town Center. We need similar support programs in neighborhoods such as Price Hill where immigrant-owned businesses are suffering due to threats of arrests by ICE.
- I've also co-sponsored workshops to help businesses get certified as MBEs/WBEs.

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?

The major barrier is access to capital. It is difficult to get a loan to start a business unless you already have been in business – it's circular! I created the Equitable Development Plan with President *Pro Tem* Victoria Parks. We looked at barriers and one of the top ones was access to capital. As a result, the City has created a fund to help small businesses meet capital needs such as hiring more employees or buying equipment that will increase their capacity to do larger, more lucrative jobs.

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?

I'm excited about the Sports Commission bringing in new sports like rugby tournaments, and youth leagues. Ben Huffman is on fire! We also need to get the ROMAC and Imperial Theatre off the ground so that they can create arts and cultural programming for youth and adults.

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?

After decades of electeds failing to get support to relocate the City's gun range, I worked across the aisle and pulled together local, county, regional, state and federal leaders. After three years of working together, we broke ground in October 2024 and next year, the Regional Safety Complex will be completed!

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