

LIZ KEATING

Candidate for City Council – Responses

The Chamber reserves the right to publish responses to this questionnaire across various channels in the process of informing our members and the public about the election.

**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 chose to re-enter public service because I love Cincinnati and believe our city deserves a Council that works with focus, accountability, and collaboration. I'm frustrated by the setbacks, and I know I can help move us forward.

In both my professional and personal experience, I've shown that I do the work: I study the issues, listen to all sides, and push for the best possible outcomes. I've led tough conversations, asked the right questions, and helped bridge divides to get things done.

Voters can hold me accountable to what I've already proven I deliver: I will come prepared to every meeting, I will ask the questions that matter, I will drive constructive debate, and I will work to unite different perspectives - because Cincinnati is strongest when we work together.

**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?**

To accelerate the Futures Commission, I would launch working groups right away. Many of the data points in the report are already a few years old, so we need both urgency and updated analysis to ensure recommendations are relevant today - particularly those related to selling city assets, **implementing shared services between departments**, and driving efficiencies in our largest operations.

From there, two priorities stand out. First, updating *Plan Cincinnati* so we have a clear, modern roadmap for growth. Second, opening the Office of Strategic Growth. Together, these steps will give us the tools to expand housing, attract investment, and revitalize

neighborhoods. Just as important, they will strengthen public trust by creating a transparent process for engagement and position the City as a better partner for businesses and residents alike.

Ultimately, the Futures Commission should not be a report that sits on a shelf. It can serve as a guidebook for ongoing improvement, even as we refine, update, and act upon the recommendations along the way.

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

Yes. Whether it begins as a dedicated senior-level position or grows into a full office over time, Cincinnati needs someone whose sole focus is on driving growth.

That role would identify challenges and roadblocks to investment, help streamline how the City partners with businesses, and ensure we're working in step with external organizations to recruit and retain employers. Just as importantly, they would stay engaged at the state level to make sure Cincinnati projects are fairly considered for funding and not overlooked in favor of other jurisdictions in Ohio.

In short, the Office of Strategic Growth - or its equivalent - is about giving Cincinnati the focus, strategy, and advocacy we need to compete for jobs, investment, and long-term prosperity.

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

Yes. I do not believe the City should pursue a trash tax at this time. Instead, we should focus on finding efficiencies within the Department of Public Services to reduce costs and improve performance.

I also do not believe an earnings tax increase is appropriate right now, for the reasons I outline in #3: Council has not shown the fiscal discipline needed to justify asking taxpayers for more. Before raising revenue, we must first manage what we have responsibly.

**2. 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 budget priorities start with investing in technology upgrades to make City government more efficient. Better tools for employees mean faster service delivery, less waste, and long-term savings for taxpayers.

Next, I would prioritize basic city services - keeping neighborhoods safe, picking up trash on time, clearing streets after snow events, and repairing potholes. Resident perception surveys should guide where we spend, because if we fail at the basics, we risk losing residents, businesses, and visitors.

Once the foundation is strong, I would expand investment in economic development and strategies to support businesses. Growing and protecting jobs expands the tax base, which is ultimately how we fund everything from public safety to infrastructure.

The tradeoff is clear: before new spending, we must focus on efficiency and results. If we get the basics right and invest in growth, Cincinnati can afford to meet its long-term obligations and deliver the services our residents and businesses deserve.

**3. 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?**

At this time, I do not support raising the City's earnings tax. Council has consistently increased spending without showing the fiscal discipline to make strategic cuts or prioritize investments that deliver real results.

We've seen this play out recently: when Council eliminated the property tax rollback (a decision I opposed), the additional revenue was immediately spent on a new program instead of being used to strengthen the budget. That's not sustainable.

Before asking taxpayers for more - especially in this economy - Council needs to demonstrate that it can manage the dollars it already has responsibly. I believe we must focus on fiscal discipline, smart investments, and measurable returns before considering any new revenue.

**4. 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?**

First and foremost, we need to stabilize the businesses we have in the City. We have seen numerous restaurants shut down or move due to safety and economic issues. That starts with delivering basic city services - including safety - throughout our city to make Cincinnati a place where people want to live, work, and play.

**5. 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, Cincinnati must continue to grow if we want to stay affordable and competitive. Growth isn't just about adding people - it's about creating opportunity.

One of our greatest opportunities is to partner with our universities and startup community. A recent study showed UC students and graduates are more likely to create a unicorn startup than peers from some of the nation's most prestigious universities. That's a huge advantage for our city.

I believe we can harness that innovative infrastructure to solve real challenges - things like recycling, potholes, snow removal, or urban flooding. If we develop solutions here, we can export them to cities around the world. That means new companies, new jobs, and new tax revenue right here in Cincinnati.

When I previously served on Council, I started the City's hack-a-thon program to connect innovators with civic challenges. If elected, I will expand those efforts and continue building a strong environment for entrepreneurship and growth.

**6. 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 helped pave the way for this legislation with my earlier density ordinance. That work focused on "missing middle" housing - duplexes, townhomes, and small multi-family buildings - near public transit, schools, hospitals, daycares, and business districts, where more housing options make the most sense.

My next priority is addressing lot sizes in lower-income neighborhoods that currently have a high percentage of rental units. By updating zoning to allow more single-family options like townhomes, we can expand pathways to homeownership. This helps families build wealth, creates more stability in neighborhoods, and balances the ratio of rental and owner-occupied homes across Cincinnati.

**7. 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?**

There are many opportunities to expand housing across Cincinnati, but the top priority should be aligning new housing with public transit investments. As new BRT routes are rolled out, Council should maximize taxpayer dollars by encouraging larger-scale housing developments along those corridors in places that make the most sense for neighborhoods. This approach connects more residents to jobs, schools, and services while driving investment into the neighborhoods served by transit.

At the same time, we must activate “missing middle” housing in partnership with organizations like The Port and Cincinnati Development Fund. These kinds of projects make homeownership more attainable, create neighborhood stability, and balance the mix of rental and owner-occupied homes across the city.

By focusing on both large transit-oriented projects and neighborhood-scale investments, Council can expand housing of all kinds, strengthen affordability, and ensure growth is shared across Cincinnati.

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

Yes. I voted against the significant cuts to the residential tax abatement program because they unfairly hurt small developers and everyday homeowners.

With construction costs rising and much of Cincinnati’s housing stock aging, we need tools that encourage reinvestment. The residential abatement program helped regular families improve their homes and supported smaller developers who play an important role in neighborhood growth.

If we limit abatements only to large-scale projects, we’ll miss opportunities to strengthen our housing supply, grow small businesses, and keep homeownership attainable for regular Cincinnatians.

**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?**

TIF districts have been an important tool in revitalizing key parts of Cincinnati, particularly Downtown and Over-the-Rhine. They work best when they're used strategically - to spark catalytic projects, close financing gaps, and make developments viable that otherwise wouldn't move forward.

Going forward, I believe TIF funds should be targeted toward projects that create long-term value for neighborhoods - whether that's attracting jobs, strengthening housing supply, or improving public infrastructure around new development.

City Council's role should be to set clear priorities and ensure transparency in how funds are used. That means aligning TIF investments with the city's broader growth agenda, making sure we're not just funding projects, but fueling sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

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

Improving Cincinnati's permitting process must be a top priority. Right now, delays and high costs discourage investment - especially from small developers who are essential to neighborhood growth.

The first step is to evaluate opportunities at the state and federal level, where legislation and potential incentives already exist to help local governments modernize permitting. Locally, we should analyze our biggest bottlenecks and utilize the Office of Performance and Data Analytics to design smarter, faster systems.

When I previously served on Council, we cut red tape on easements by creating a data-driven automatic approval process. That same approach can be applied to permitting - using data and process improvements to save time, lower costs, and make it easier to do business in Cincinnati.

**8. 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?**

City Council has a responsibility to grow Cincinnati in a way that supports residents, attracts business, and ensures long-term affordability. Housing is central to that mission - if we don't build enough, we risk losing jobs, investment, and future generations of families who want to call Cincinnati home.

Unfortunately, recent housing debates have created losses for everyone - the City, neighborhoods, and economic development. Public trust has eroded, and some developers may now hesitate to invest here. That could set us back years.

When I was previously on Council, we took a proactive approach by working with neighborhood business districts *before* development was proposed. Together, we identified buildings that should be protected and updated neighborhood plans to modernize zoning. That gave residents a voice early, created clearer expectations, and made the approval process smoother for developers.

Our current zoning isn't perfect, but being proactive - updating plans, engaging neighborhoods ahead of time, and balancing preservation with growth - sets us up for thoughtful development and reduces the kind of divisive fights that slow progress.

**9. 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?**

Incentives play a critical role in Cincinnati's economic growth. As an older city with limited land and aging infrastructure, it's often more expensive and complicated to build here compared to surrounding areas. Incentives help level the playing field and make investment in Cincinnati possible.

That said, incentives should be targeted and strategic. They should close the final financial gap that gets a project across the finish line - whether that's securing bank financing or making a catalytic neighborhood project viable. Not every project requires incentives, but in today's economic climate, many need more creative tools to move forward.

The goal should always be the same: use incentives to unlock projects that bring long-term value - jobs, housing, stronger neighborhoods, and a healthier tax base for Cincinnati.

**10. 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?**

While City Council doesn't oversee schools directly, it can play a vital role in building a strong workforce pipeline. That starts with investing in youth jobs, supporting partnerships with schools and training programs, and making sure what students are learning aligns with where future jobs will be.

For example, the City and State have invested heavily in brownfield remediation and site preparation to support the return of manufacturing while onshoring manufacturing has remained a focus for successive Presidential administrations. We should be working with schools and training providers to prepare students for those jobs now. The same applies to major infrastructure investments - like the Brent Spence Companion Bridge or projects funded through the Railroad Trust. These are once-in-a-generation opportunities to connect young people to careers that will shape Cincinnati's future.

City Council's role is to anticipate where growth is coming, align resources to support it, and make sure Cincinnati remains a place where young professionals and families can find opportunity and build a future.

**11. 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?**

Improving both real and perceived safety requires a balanced approach: strong law enforcement to address violent crime directly, and sustained investment in proven prevention programs that tackle root causes.

During my time on Council, I supported fully staffing our police department, maximizing recruit classes, and launching the officer wellness unit to strengthen mental health and retention. A healthy, well-trained force is essential to keeping our neighborhoods safe.

At the same time, I worked to expand opportunities for young people - opening all city pools so kids had safe places to go in the summer, volunteering as a lifeguard myself, and launching a youth e-sports program in neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence. That program has now grown to a dozen rec centers and serves as both a safe space for teens and a pipeline into tech careers.

I also led the Main Street Task Force after the 2022 mass shooting, bringing together neighbors, businesses, and city departments to reduce crime through collaboration. That model - combining enforcement with community engagement - works.

The key is this: we must stop the violent offenders of today while investing in the proven programs that prevent the crimes of tomorrow.

Measuring success means tracking both crime statistics and the community's perception of safety.

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

One concrete way I would engage business leaders is through structured, ongoing collaboration - similar to the Main Street Task Force I led after the 2022 mass shooting. On that task force, we worked directly with bars and restaurants to solve real challenges: establishing rideshare pickup zones, addressing illegal food sales, improving parking enforcement, and revitalizing empty storefronts with startups that energize the community and provide entrepreneurs with a place to test their business ideas.

We didn't just meet once and move on - we met weekly, stayed in close communication, and I personally visited Main Street after midnight alongside city staff to hear directly from business owners, residents, and employees, while witnessing firsthand the challenges we needed to tackle. That hands-on engagement built trust and produced results.

For accountability, I believe in setting clear goals, reporting back progress publicly, and keeping an open feedback loop with business leaders and the community. When businesses know their concerns are heard and see measurable improvements - whether that's reduced incidents, safer traffic flow, or more welcoming environments - they stay invested in being part of the solution.

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

The first priority for supporting small businesses is safety. No business can thrive if customers don't feel safe coming to their neighborhood business district. That's the foundation.

The second is making sure businesses have the resources they need - especially when unexpected challenges arise. When I first joined Council, several major storms flooded neighborhood business districts across the city. At the time, the City had strong programs for homeowners, but no system in place to support small businesses. My team created a call log, checked in with every business after storms, and worked directly with City departments to coordinate cleanup and repairs. That work led to more investment and infrastructure improvements to better protect small businesses.

That's the approach I'll bring back to Council: hands-on, responsive, and focused on problem-solving. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our neighborhoods, and City Hall should always be looking for new ways to help them grow and succeed.

**14. 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?**

One of the biggest barriers to growing small, minority, and women-owned businesses in Cincinnati is access to the scale and opportunities needed to compete in high-demand industries. As we face the "Silver Tsunami" - a generational wave of retirements and business ownership transitions - we have a unique chance to expand local ownership and strengthen our economy.

The City should partner more closely with the Minority Business Accelerator to recruit satellite offices, attract investment, and support mergers and acquisitions that allow minority- and women-owned businesses to grow here. By focusing on industries that are underrepresented locally - but are poised for growth, like suppliers and subcontractors in advanced manufacturing and housing development - we can ensure these businesses are positioned to lead where demand will be strongest.

City Council's role is to clear barriers, align resources, and make sure our economic development strategy actively includes small, minority, and women-owned businesses as central players in Cincinnati's future growth.

**15. 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 believe the City should prioritize cultural and tourism investments with the greatest potential for growth and long-term impact. That means focusing on events and institutions that can attract visitors, generate revenue, and strengthen Cincinnati's brand as a vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

The City's role should be as a partner and catalyst - not the sole funder. Public investment is most effective when it leverages additional private and philanthropic dollars, helping to grow events and then stepping back to make room for new opportunities.

In terms of funding, the City can use a portion of increased revenue from ticket taxes, or provide in-kind support such as public safety, traffic, or sanitation services to help keep event budgets manageable. This ensures we support cultural growth responsibly, while making sure taxpayer dollars are used strategically and sustainably.

**16. 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've spent significant time building relationships with leaders at every level of government - city, county, regional, state, and federal - regardless of party. Those relationships don't happen overnight. They're built by showing up, listening, and engaging long before you need something from them. That trust and goodwill pays off when Cincinnati needs support for major projects or policy initiatives.

I firmly believe that partisan politics have no place in delivering for our city. What matters is getting results. I've proven that I can work across the aisle and across levels of government to secure the best outcomes for Cincinnati, and I will continue to do so. My focus will always be on finding common ground and advancing solutions that benefit the people of this city.