

EVAN NOLAN

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?

I watched Tom Browning's perfect game from Carl Lindner's luxury box. My grandfather was Mr. Lindner's driver, and Mr. Lindner had given him the tickets for his 68th birthday. Mr. Lindner treated my grandfather incredibly well, and my grandfather took excellent care of Mr. Lindner. Because of the opportunities my grandfather was given, my father was able to attend college and then find a full-time job while attending law school at night. My father, building on what he learned from my grandfather, went on to become a career public defender, serving our fellow citizens who have found themselves facing the lowest points of their lives. From these two and my mother, after her long career with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, I learned what it means to help others, especially those who are most in need. Building on what they have taught me, with the opportunities I have been given, I have dedicated my education and professional experience to taking on the biggest problems this world has set in front of me. At each opportunity, I have offered, "What can I do to help?"

Out of college, I took a consulting job with IBM as a public sector consultant, first with the US Air Force in the Pentagon and then with the US Postal Service, in both roles supporting teams that were identifying ways to make government more efficient. When the work became tedious and my education felt limiting, I decided to go to law school at Georgetown Law. After graduating, I asked US Senator Sherrod Brown what I could do to help and was hired to serve as a Legal Fellow helping manage his work on the US Senate Banking Committee.

After the fellowship, I convinced my (now) wife that it was time to move home to Cincinnati. My hometown was on the verge of a renaissance. In OTR, where my high school prom had been planned before being moved to Butler County because of the 2001 riots, a transformation had begun, and the neighborhood was becoming the entertainment and dining hub of the City. The Banks was finally coming out of the ground, and I became the second person to sign a lease to move into the much anticipated riverfront development.

After three years of practicing banking law and public company M&A at a large national law firm, I switched to a smaller firm so I could have more professional capacity to commit to civic engagement, while continuing represent businesses in

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M&A transactions, including real estate. I joined the Oakley Community Council and served for eight years, five as Vice President and all of them as Chair of the Economic Development & Zoning Committee. I joined the board of our church, Knox Presbyterian. And I sought out opportunities to support political candidates who I believed shared my policies, priorities, and goals and asked them what I could do to help. One of those candidates, Aftab Pureval, asked me to serve as his Treasurer, a role I held for seven years through four campaigns, including his congressional and mayoral campaigns.

When several of the candidates I supported were elected to City Hall, I was excited about the new era in City government. This time, I asked the City Solicitor what I could do to help, and then-Solicitor Andrew Garth asked if I would consider leaving the partnership at the law firm to join the City Law Department. I was thrilled by the prospect and joined the City as Chief Counsel for Special Projects and Policy Initiatives, a new role designed to help support the fresh ideas being brought to City Hall.

When then-Councilmember Greg Landsman was elected to Congress, I heeded the advice of several City leaders and applied for the open Council seat. Though I did not get that appointment, my policies, priorities, and goals have remained the same. I found opportunities to support the City from outside City Hall and continued to support candidates across the City and County. When then-Councilmember Reggie Harris resigned from his seat, Councilmember Meeka Owens reached out, and I asked what I could do to help. She asked if I was still interested in the opportunity to serve on City Council.

For me, the appointment was a huge step into the limelight. But it didn't change who I am, the work I do, or how I do it. I have seen a lot of change in Cincinnati over the years, most of it for the better. It excites me. It motivates me. I want to be a part of it, and I want to do my part. I want to know what can I do to help. And it is work that must be done in collaboration with others.

I have focused my time in office (and now on the campaign) on two priorities: growing the city and growing the city more equitably. Our City thrives when it's in growth mode. We had a declining population for sixty years and finally turned a corner in the last full decade. To sustain and drive this growth, the City needs to invest in and promote: public safety, more efficient development, more housing, and greater job opportunities. We must also acknowledge and address our racial disparities, which are wide, exceed those of our peer cities, and are moving in the wrong direction. We have well-researched policies that can help address these issues, and we must more meaningfully invest in those.

The measurable outcomes are clear – is our City growing? Are people moving to our City? Are immigrants moving to our City? Are people staying or returning after college? Are people finding housing, and have we gotten rising home prices and rent increases under control? Have we addressed the racial wealth gap or the racial health gap? The data is there. We need to learn from it and use it to inform our decisions and policy-making.

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?

First, I must mention that the Futures Commission was one of the ideas that inspired me to leave the law firm and join the City Law Department. On behalf of the Mayor's office, and in collaboration with Pete Metz at the Chamber, I helped design the framework that became the Futures Commission. Unfortunately, I have been disappointed with the lack of progress on the recommendations that were made.

I will continue to push the Mayor and City Manager. If they are not willing to move forward, then City Council must take the lead. As a newly appointed Councilmember, I had some work to do to build relationships and build trust at City Hall and in the community. Having not campaigned and gained the confidence of the electorate, I started with a bit of a deficit in political capital. Over the past eleven months, I have found colleagues and community partners who are willing to push forward on some important recommendations, and I intend to make those recommendations a major focus of my time in office if I am elected.

I have worked as an attorney in town for fifteen years, many of those years working on real estate matters. I served nearly a year inside the City's Law Department where I acted as chief counsel to the Department of Planning and Engagement and the City Planning Commission. I served eight years as Chair of the Economic Development & Zoning Committee of the Oakley Community Council, during a time of remarkable development growth. My experience has taught me a lot, and our City has tremendous room for improvement in how we approach community and economic development. There are several related recommendations from the Futures Commission that speak to these desperate needs – the Office of Strategic Growth, the updated land use plan (Plan Cincinnati), the process review for developments engaged with the City, the

earnings tax increase proposals, and the investment opportunities that flow from them. While I believe each and every recommendation should be given proper consideration, these particular recommendations, because of my background and experience, appear to be the top priorities for me.

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

Yes, absolutely, without a doubt. I have pushed the City Administration to move on this recommendation, and the movement has been slow. I have been in conversations with others about how to move this forward and get the Administration rowing in the same direction. In the meantime, I have created the Community Investment Subcommittee underneath the Equitable Growth & Housing Committee that aims to lay the groundwork for what the Office of Strategic Growth can and should become.

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

As mentioned, all recommendations deserve consideration. There are some that inspire me less than others. For example, I recognize the work that Great Parks does, and when in the Law Department, I helped negotiate the deal to have Great Parks manage the upcoming Oasis Trail. However, I am not yet convinced that Mt. Airy Forest is an asset that needs to be turned over to Great Parks. It's a significant asset, it's inside the City, and it likely requires its own dedicated staff and resources. It is not yet clear to me what economies of scale would result from transitioning that over to Great Parks.

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?

In the face of our recent public safety issues, we must ensure that our City is safe. However, the recent public safety fund allocations need not be made permanent. Rather, we must make investments that address the root causes of the public safety issues we face. Recent investments in additional staffing and technological improvements will reduce overtime expenses and help improve operational efficiency. The same is true in the Department of Public Services. Longer term, we must focus investments in economic development across the City to sustain and spur our City's growth. We must invest equitably so that our City's growth is not limited to certain neighborhoods. In the long-term, growth will help address some of our financial needs. I believe that there are buckets of money that are not being well-used. I am hopeful that we can address public safety concerns and invest in growth without having to make any major cuts.

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?

Yes, based on what was proposed in the Futures Commission report, I support consideration of the recommended earnings tax increase. At this point, all we have is the recommendation from the Futures Commission. I believe we need a more public evaluation of the consideration, and then we need to take action. Without additional information, I am not in a position to make any specific recommendation on the extent of, or uses for, an earnings tax increase beyond the recommendation of the Futures Commission. The Futures Commission presents what I believe is a good start and a strong recommendation to consider.

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?

Yes, we have experienced great success with these organizations. Some of these relationships have developed over time. We must continue to fund and nurture these relationships and partner with them on projects big and small. We must also find better ways to demonstrate the return on investment with these partners so that foster a more supportive environment for the work that they are doing.

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

Yes, it is critical to the City's growth that we continue to invest funds and dedicate resources to the development of more housing across the price spectrum. The City should commit to regular annual investments and supplement those investments with funds from the waterfall when available.

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

The approach is multi-faceted. First, we must lay the groundwork – we must ensure we have the necessary housing (for the people in the City today and those we hope to attract), we must have the proper educational opportunities and workforce development programs and initiatives, and we must have a safe and efficient transportation network (public transit and infrastructure). Second, we must create the appropriate incentives and leverage our funds alongside other public partners and the external partners named above to maximize the impact.

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, absolutely, Cincinnati needs to grow. I question the motives of anyone who suggests otherwise. The City's greatest opportunity for growth is community and economic development. We have unique, charming business districts across our 52 neighborhoods. Neighbors rave about the walkability and community charm and take great pride in their neighborhoods. Yet, each neighborhood business district suffers from issues with vacancy and sustainability. We need to reimagine these districts and grow our neighborhoods, just as we have with downtown CBD and OTR. We need to grow our programs that provide funding for neighborhood development. We must also convene the public parties and stakeholders needed to make significant investments in neighborhoods that are ripe for development and can benefit the most – like the West End and Mill Creek Corridor.

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?

Yes, I support Connected Communities. When I worked in the Law Department, I helped advise on the groundwork that led to the adoption of this policy. I think we need to review and evaluate the impacts of these changes to the Zoning Code as time goes on. There has been plenty of opposition to the policy, expressing a wide range and inconsistent array of objections. I believe the City Administration should focus on updating Plan Cincinnati, improving the development process, embracing the Office of Strategic Growth, and enhancing the funding opportunities to spur growth that is now possible thanks to Connected Communities.

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?

The list is long but doable. Council can play a role in establishing and funding the Office of Strategic Growth. Council must use its platform to push for the update to Plan Cincinnati and the evaluation of the development process. Council must push for updates to neighborhood master plans and improve the process for earlier, more efficient engagement with neighborhood stakeholders. Council must do what it can to help foster and cultivate a more development-friendly culture. Council must develop a coherent and consistent economic development funding apparatus that helps address gaps throughout the development lifecycle, so that gaps are filled and obstacles are overcome.

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

I believe in relying on data and evidence. If evidence is presented that housing production has slowed *because of* changes to the residential tax abatement program, then we should absolutely reconsider those changes. Lots of factors play into housing production numbers. While the City may not be able to address all such factors, we must consider all options on the table and identify ways to make improvements where possible.

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 provide a creative tool for capturing the benefits of growth and development and producing resources to continue investments back into communities. These tools are critical to the City's growth agenda. I do think we let some of our TIF funds languish, in part because of the overly restrictive rules in place. Some rules can be addressed, though some require state attention. I believe we need to conduct a large scale evaluation of our TIF districts to identify what has worked and what has not, which will help identify potential changes that may be need to improve the effectiveness of these TIF districts. When the opportunity is available, City Council should prioritize the use of TIF funds because of the restrictions that are in place.

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

We need to push the Administration to complete a review of the permitting and development process. I believe there are opportunities for improvement. We need to address the staffing shortages in the relevant departments so that requests do not languish.

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?

City Council has a duty to abide by the Charter, Municipal Code, and Ohio Revised Code and to act in the best interests of the municipal corporation as a whole. Given the state of housing in Cincinnati today, I firmly believe that Council has a duty to advance a consistent pro-growth housing policy. There will always be opponents. No development receives unanimous approval from constituents. City Planning Commission has a duty to evaluate the recommendation of Planning Department staff,

and City Council has a duty to evaluate the recommendation of Planning Commission. When Council hears opposition, Council can consider that opposition against the benefits that accrue from completion of a given development. And Council must do its homework to understand what opposition is legitimate versus what is contrived and to understand the true impacts of the benefits that accrue not just from a single project but from the creation of a more development-friendly culture. Process improvements must be made to facilitate the feedback from our neighbors, so that the feedback can be used to help inform development and not obstruct 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?

I agree that economic incentives, when utilized appropriately, play a major role in Cincinnati's growth. The cost of supplies and the cost of labor make development more expensive. Because of how affordable it has been in Cincinnati for so long, projects can be difficult to pencil out. Incentives can help close those gaps. Additionally, when new job opportunities are created, everyone benefits. Economic incentives directly tied to job creation help provide the opportunities needed to retain and attract talent to the City of Cincinnati. Large-scale projects, where the City collaborates with other community partners, provide some of the best opportunities for utilizing economic incentives.

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?

The City can always use its statutory tools and invest funds to provide grants, tax credits, or incentives to help stimulate job growth. Additionally, we must also facilitate and promote the amenities of a big city that attract and retain young professionals who are looking for a place to call home. Young professionals are focused less on how much money they can make and are looking more for quality of life. Our City has an opportunity to distinguish ourselves from our peer cities.

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?

Public safety always needs to be priority #1. It also needs to be a joint venture between all public stakeholders. Today, we see a lot of finger-pointing. We need good faith partners who are willing to sit down at the table together and talk about a more collaborative approach. I have been connecting with some of these stakeholders to

address what some have called “the revolving door of justice.” I believe we need to implement more transparency, communication, and process in the criminal justice system. It appears that there are several real opportunities to improve the processes and create more transparent access to information about the system. We will then need to better communicate the results to the public, so people understand where issues may lie, and we can all advocate for change that improves the system and makes it more effective at punishing those who engage in criminal activity and ultimately deterring it from happening again.

To improve actual safety, we need to look at the policies that have worked here and in other cities and allocate the funds necessary to make those policies work. To strengthen the community’s sense of security, we need to better communicate about the work we are doing and the results we are seeing. We need to be more transparent. Data matters but how you interpret and communicate that data matters more. We cannot allow those who want to see us fail control the narrative. We can measure success in lots of ways. Is there still market demand for residential units in the urban core for people who want to live downtown and in OTR? Is there still market demand for hotel rooms for people who want to come visit? If those numbers stay strong, then we are headed in the right direction and we should try not to lose course.

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

I think the City, alongside other public partners, needs to listen carefully and understand the specific concerns. A couple high profile incidents do not define the state of public safety in our City. Let’s understand the data and let’s understand the public concerns. Then, once we have taken steps to address some of the issues we have seen and heard about, we need to better communicate with business leaders on the progress we have made and any additional changes that are being made.

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

We need to foster an environment that creates demand. We need to add housing, through density and development. We need to invest in public transit improvements. We also need to help promote supply. We need to identify and help overcome barriers to entry. We need to ensure the start-up ecosystem is strong, not just downtown but across the City.

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?

One such existing barrier is access to space. We have lots of vacant properties across the City and throughout our neighborhood business districts. We need to find ways to help close the gap between landlord demands and what a growing business can

afford to pay in rent. Helping promote development of more spaces and increasing supply can help drive down rents. And, the City can make funding accessible for certain start-up costs to promote more small, minority, or women-owned businesses.

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?

The arts, cultural institutions, and major events also take many different shapes and sizes. I believe it is important for the City to make these investments, because the City certainly benefits. Residents experience improved quality of life, and visitors help drive the local economy with their spending. We have formalized the process for making investments in human services and, to some extent, in economic development. We should create a system that similarly helps the City evaluate investment opportunities so that City dollars can be leveraged alongside other public and private funding to maximize the impact of these investments. I believe it is the City's job to promote, facilitate, and help fund such institutions and events, but it is not the City's job to fund them alone and in their entirety.

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?

I believe strongly in bipartisan problem-solving. All ideas, if brought forward in good faith with the goal to make the City a better place, should be on the table for discussion. When I worked in the Law Department, I worked with then-Councilmember Liz Keating on her work to improve the City Charter. In my time on Council, I have picked up on that work and have put forward my own Charter amendment to improve the way our City handles campaign finance reports. I have also connected with State Senator Bill Blessing to discuss ways in which we can collaborate to address the housing shortage. There are elected officials on both sides who are willing to put in the time and do the work. I seek them out and find ways to get things done. I have done it before and I hope to have the opportunity to continue that work.