

# Cincinnati Regional Chamber 2025 Council Candidate Questionnaire

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## **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 am a native Cincinnati, and I am running to close the disparity gap. I have lived experience being raised in Cincinnati, educated in CPS, with degrees from UC and XU, I served 32 years in the Cincinnati Fire Department, and 32 years in the Ohio National Guard and US Army Reserves. My goal is to close the disparity gap in wealth, health, and safety.

I am running for Cincinnati City Council because our city stands at a critical juncture where we can either embrace inclusive growth that benefits all residents or risk deepening existing disparities. My motivation stems from seeing firsthand how business growth and equity initiatives can work hand-in-hand to create a stronger, more prosperous Cincinnati for everyone.

My professional experience has taught me the importance of data-driven decision-making and stakeholder collaboration. I've witnessed how targeted investments in underserved communities can generate significant returns while creating pathways to economic mobility. My personal experience has given me insight into both the challenges and opportunities facing Cincinnati families today.

Voters should hold me accountable for measurable outcomes that reflect both economic growth and community equity. I commit to reducing racial and economic disparities in business ownership by 25% through expanded access to capital and mentorship programs. I will work to support the creation of 5,000 new housing units across all income levels while ensuring that 30% are affordable to families earning 80% of the area median income or below. Additionally, I plan to increase minority and women-owned business participation in city contracts by 40%, achieve full implementation of Cincinnati Futures Commission recommendations within my term, and maintain or improve Cincinnati's economic competitiveness rankings while ensuring growth benefits reach every neighborhood.

## **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?**

The Cincinnati Futures Commission provides our roadmap for sustainable, equitable growth. To accelerate implementation, I would champion the creation of a dedicated implementation task force with clear timelines, measurable benchmarks, and regular public reporting on progress.

Among the Commission's recommendations, several deserve immediate priority. First, establishing the Office of Strategic Growth will help coordinate economic development efforts and ensure equitable outcomes across all neighborhoods. Second, implementing workforce development initiatives that connect residents to emerging industries while addressing skills gaps is crucial for our long-term competitiveness. Third, pursuing housing production and affordability strategies that balance market-rate development with community needs will help address our housing crisis. Ultimately, enhancing small business and entrepreneurship support systems, particularly for minority- and women-owned enterprises, will help build community wealth and reduce disparities.

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

Yes, I strongly support creating the Office of Strategic Growth. This office is essential for coordinating our economic development efforts and ensuring that growth benefits all Cincinnati residents. The office should have a clear mandate to track equity metrics, coordinate between departments, and ensure that our growth strategies actively address historical disparities rather than inadvertently worsening them.

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

While I support the vast majority of the Commission's recommendations, any implementation must be evaluated through an equity lens. I would want to ensure that recommendations don't inadvertently accelerate gentrification without corresponding community protections. Every recommendation should include specific measures to prevent displacement and ensure existing residents benefit from new investments.

## **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?**

My budget philosophy centers on strategic investments that generate both economic returns and equity outcomes. We must meet our pension and safety obligations while investing in Cincinnati's future.

When I think about budget priorities, workforce development programs that connect residents to good-paying jobs rise to the top of my list. Small business support and entrepreneurship programs, particularly for underrepresented communities, represent another crucial investment. Infrastructure improvements that support both economic development and quality of life deserve attention, as do cultural institutions and arts programming that drive tourism and community pride.

I see opportunities for cost savings through streamlining permitting and development processes to reduce administrative overhead. We can consolidate overlapping economic development functions and implement performance-based budgeting to eliminate ineffective programs. Pursuing regional collaboration to share costs for major infrastructure projects could also yield significant savings.

Strategic investments should focus on expanding minority and women-owned business incubators, creating a revolving loan fund for small businesses in underserved areas, investing in digital infrastructure and technology access, and supporting cultural institutions that serve as economic drivers.

The tradeoffs I'm willing to make include postponing non-essential capital projects while accelerating investments that demonstrably create jobs and reduce disparities. Every dollar spent should advance both economic competitiveness and equity 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?**

I would only support a modest earnings tax increase if it's coupled with clear commitments to equity and economic development outcomes. Any increase should be minimal—perhaps 0.1 to 0.2 percent—and dedicated to specific investments that benefit all residents. These would include workforce development and job training programs, small business support and access to capital, infrastructure improvements in underserved neighborhoods, and cultural institutions and programming that drive economic activity.

Before considering any tax increase, we must demonstrate that we're maximizing efficiency in current spending and that new revenue will generate measurable returns in job creation and disparity reduction.

## **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, but with enhanced accountability measures and equity requirements. These organizations have been valuable partners in Cincinnati's growth, but we must ensure their work benefits all communities. I support continued funding with several important conditions: clear equity metrics and reporting requirements, mandated inclusion of minority and women-owned businesses in their programs, geographic distribution requirements ensuring investments reach underserved areas, and regular performance reviews with community input.

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

#### **130 million raise, 74 million invested by/and managed by Community Development Fund**

Absolutely. The Affordable Housing Leverage Fund is essential for addressing our housing affordability crisis. I would support not only continuing this funding but exploring ways to expand it, potentially through partnerships with employers and anchor institutions.

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

To support job growth and site development, I would focus on creating sector-specific workforce development partnerships with employers and establishing minority business enterprise requirements for major development projects. Streamlining permitting while maintaining environmental and safety standards is essential, as is developing targeted incentive packages for businesses that commit to local hiring and equity goals. I would also support brownfield redevelopment in underserved areas and foster innovation districts that connect educational institutions with emerging industries.

## **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?**

Cincinnati absolutely needs to grow, but growth must be inclusive and sustainable. Our greatest opportunity lies in leveraging our unique assets—world-class cultural institutions, growing tech sector, strong healthcare and education systems, and our geographic advantages—while ensuring growth reduces rather than exacerbates disparities.

I see tremendous potential in advanced manufacturing and logistics, taking advantage of our transportation infrastructure. Healthcare and life sciences innovation represent another major opportunity, along with our creative economy and cultural tourism sector. The technology and innovation sectors also offer significant growth potential.

To make this successful, City Council should provide inclusive zoning policies that require affordable housing in all developments, targeted business incubators for underrepresented entrepreneurs, and infrastructure investments that connect all neighborhoods to opportunity. We need streamlined development processes with equity requirements, and regional collaboration frameworks for major projects.

## **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'm not sure I fully support Connected Communities as a step toward increasing housing supply, as we need additional measures to ensure this doesn't accelerate displacement without community benefits.

Beyond Connected Communities, I would support inclusionary zoning requirements for market-rate developments and community land trust provisions to preserve long-term affordability. Transit-oriented development incentives with affordability requirements make sense, as do mixed-income development standards in all neighborhoods. We also need anti-displacement protections for existing residents and community benefit agreements for major developments.

## **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?**

Council should implement inclusionary zoning with flexibility for developers to meet requirements through on-site units, in-lieu fees, or off-site construction. Creating a community land trust program to preserve long-term affordability is equally important. I would also support establishing acquisition and rehabilitation programs for naturally occurring affordable housing, supporting innovative housing models like co-housing, tiny home villages, and accessory dwelling units. Partnering with employers and anchor institutions on workforce housing initiatives makes sense, as does streamlining approval processes for affordable housing developments.

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

Yes, but with significant modifications to ensure equity outcomes. Any restored tax abatement program should include affordability requirements for all participating developments, geographic distribution requirements, local hiring and minority contractor participation standards, community benefit provisions, and regular performance reviews measuring both production and equity outcomes.

**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 should be strategic tools for catalyzing development in areas that need investment while generating broader community benefits. TIF funds should prioritize infrastructure improvements that benefit entire communities, workforce development and job training programs, small business development and entrepreneurship support, affordable housing development, and community facilities and amenities.

Council should maintain strong oversight of TIF districts, requiring regular reporting on job creation, business development, and community impact. Every TIF should include specific equity metrics and community benefit requirements.

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

I would implement digital permitting systems with clear timelines and create a one-stop shop for development approvals. Establishing dedicated staff for affordable housing and small business development is important, as is providing technical assistance and reduced fees for minority and women-owned developers. We should streamline processes while maintaining community input opportunities and create predictable approval pathways for projects meeting equity standards.

**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 responsibility to balance legitimate community concerns with citywide housing needs and equity goals. This requires authentic community engagement, not just public hearings where decisions are predetermined.

My approach involves requiring early and ongoing community engagement for all major developments and ensuring proposed developments include community benefits and affordable housing components. I would support existing residents through anti-displacement programs and create pathways for community ownership and wealth-building. We must address legitimate concerns about infrastructure capacity, traffic, and design while standing firm against opposition rooted in exclusion or discrimination.

The key is ensuring that growth creates opportunities for existing residents rather than displacing them. This means requiring developers to contribute to community benefits, supporting local businesses, and creating pathways for community wealth-building.

**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?**

Economic incentives remain important tools, but they must be redesigned to advance equity alongside growth. Every incentive should include measurable community benefit requirements.

Projects that warrant increased incentives include developments with significant affordable housing components, businesses committing to local hiring and career pathway programs, minority and women-owned business expansions, companies partnering with community organizations on workforce development, cultural institutions and creative economy projects, and advanced manufacturing and

innovation sector investments that create good-paying jobs accessible to residents without four-year degrees.

All incentives should include clawback provisions if equity commitments aren't met, and we should regularly evaluate their effectiveness in creating broad-based prosperity.

## **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?**

Council should champion initiatives that develop local talent while creating an environment attractive to newcomers. This means investing in both people and place.

For workforce development, I would partner with employers on apprenticeship and career pathway programs, support community college and university workforce initiatives, create sector-specific training programs in high-growth industries, and establish entrepreneurship support systems, particularly for underrepresented groups.

To improve the quality of place, I would support cultural institutions and programming that create vibrancy, invest in transit, bike infrastructure, and walkable neighborhoods, ensure affordable housing options for young professionals and families, create welcoming, inclusive communities where everyone can thrive, and support small business districts that provide unique neighborhood amenities.

## **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?**

Safety requires both immediate interventions and long-term investments in opportunity and community well-being.

In the short term, I would support enhanced community policing with resident engagement and accountability measures, improved street lighting and environmental design in high-crime areas, rapid

response to quality-of-life issues that affect neighborhood perception, community-based violence intervention programs, and mental health and addiction support services.

Long-term strategies should include job creation and workforce development in underserved communities, youth programming and mentorship opportunities, small business development that creates community ownership, affordable housing, and anti-displacement policies that maintain community stability, and community health and wellness initiatives.

I would measure success through crime statistics by type and geography, community survey data on perception of safety, economic indicators in traditionally underinvested neighborhoods, youth engagement and educational outcomes, and small business creation and sustainability rates.

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

I would create a Public Safety Business Partnership that connects employers with community-based violence intervention programs and workforce development initiatives. This partnership would involve quarterly meetings between business leaders, community organizations, and city officials, with specific commitments from businesses to support job training and placement for at-risk youth. It would also include investment in community-based organizations working on violence prevention and support for small business development in areas affected by crime.

For accountability, I would require regular reporting on job placements and career advancement, gather community feedback on program effectiveness, track data on violence reduction in targeted areas, and conduct annual reviews with public reporting on outcomes. This approach recognizes that sustainable public safety requires addressing root causes while engaging the business community as partners in the solution.

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

Small businesses create community wealth, neighborhood character, and economic resilience. My support would focus on several key areas.

For financial support, I would establish a revolving loan fund for small businesses, particularly in underserved areas, create micro-grant programs for business expansion and facade improvements,

support community development financial institutions serving entrepreneurs, and reduce fees and streamline licensing for small businesses.

Technical assistance would involve partnering with SCORE, small business development centers, and community organizations, creating peer mentoring networks connecting established and emerging entrepreneurs, providing marketing and digital presence support, and offering assistance with government contracting and certification processes.

Policy support would include implementing "buy local" procurement preferences for city purchasing, supporting mixed-use zoning that allows neighborhood businesses to thrive, creating small business improvement districts with community input, and protecting against chain store oversaturation in unique neighborhood districts.

## **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?**

Access to capital remains the primary barrier for minority and women-owned businesses. Traditional lending institutions often lack understanding of these communities and markets, creating gaps that the city can help address.

The city's role should include capitalizing and expanding community development financial institutions, creating guarantee programs that reduce lender risk for small business loans, supporting minority-focused business incubators and accelerators, establishing procurement programs that create revenue opportunities for emerging businesses, partnering with anchor institutions on supplier diversity initiatives, and providing technical assistance on business planning and financial management.

Specifically, I would champion the creation of a \$10 million Small Business Equity Fund that provides low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance specifically for minority and women-owned businesses, funded through a combination of city investment, federal resources, and private partnerships.

## **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?**

Cultural investments are economic development investments that create jobs, attract visitors, and build community pride. My investment priorities include community-based arts organizations that serve

residents year-round, cultural institutions that provide educational programming and workforce development, festivals and events that showcase neighborhood businesses and diverse communities, creative economy initiatives that support working artists and cultural entrepreneurs, and historic preservation projects that maintain neighborhood character while supporting development.

For funding, I would dedicate a portion of hotel tax revenue, develop corporate partnerships with community benefit requirements, pursue federal and state arts and tourism grants, engage in regional collaboration on major cultural initiatives, and support private fundraising with city matching funds. Cultural investments should include specific requirements for community engagement, local business participation, and workforce development opportunities.

## **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?**

Effective regional collaboration requires building relationships based on shared interests and mutual benefits, regardless of political affiliation.

My approach would focus on shared economic and community interests that transcend partisan politics, develop specific proposals that demonstrate benefits for multiple jurisdictions, build coalitions of business, community, and civic leaders to support regional initiatives, participate actively in regional organizations and planning processes, communicate regularly with county, state, and federal representatives, and maintain professional relationships while seeking common ground.

Specific strategies would include championing regional workforce development initiatives that benefit multiple communities, supporting transportation and infrastructure projects with broad regional impact, collaborating on public safety initiatives that cross jurisdictional boundaries, working together on environmental and public health issues, and jointly pursuing federal funding opportunities for infrastructure and economic development.

Success requires demonstrating how Cincinnati's prosperity contributes to regional prosperity, making our needs everyone's interest.

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*These responses reflect my commitment to inclusive growth that advances both economic competitiveness and equity outcomes. I believe Cincinnati's future depends on ensuring that all residents can participate in and benefit from our city's success.*

