

SCOTTY JOHNSON

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 am running for re-election to continue the progress my colleagues and myself have made since taking office officially in 2022. What motivated me to seek re-election is a lifelong commitment to this community. My professional background spans a 33-year career with the Cincinnati Police Department—as a beat cop, school resource officer, SWAT negotiator, public liaison, and one of the first Community-Oriented Policing officers—where I built bridges between law enforcement and neighborhoods across our city. Voters should hold me accountable for building and sustaining those bridges—whether that’s fostering trust, strengthening community-police relations, or advancing effective safety and resource initiatives that deliver measurable improvements in 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?** Top priority is the city’s pension system. We must make sure our retired employees are properly compensated. We must continue to properly fund the retirement system with increases through 2045.
 - b. Do you support the creation of the Office of Strategic Growth?** Yes, with proper oversight.
 - c. Are there recommendations you believe the City should not pursue?** I believe all recommendations are up for further review.
- 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 must prioritize economic growth. We also must continue to support developments like the convention center district, which is long overdue. Safety and housing also remain top priorities.
- 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, I would consider supporting an increase in the City’s earnings tax only if there’s a clear,

targeted plan for how the new funds would be invested. I'd be open to a modest increase if it's dedicated to expanding business development, homeownership, or frontline services like first responders.

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.
 - 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?** As stated in Question #4, we need to support and partner with the county on major projects like the convention district. When necessary, we must provide incentives to developers.
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?** I firmly believe Cincinnati must grow, and our greatest opportunity is in ensuring that growth is inclusive, especially by bringing good-paying jobs into underserved neighborhoods and expanding affordable housing. City Council can support this by deploying a housing strategy that incentivizes affordability and density, while allowing connections between employers and communities to drive equitable economic development.
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 did not support Connected Communities. I believe it was rushed with minimal community input. There are good things in the ordinance, but there is room for improvements. I worked with the Vice Mayor on a town hall meeting with over 200 residents present providing input.
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?** Continue to provide incentives when applicable.
 - b. **Would you restore the residential tax abatement program if presented with evidence that housing production has slowed?** I would consider it, yes.
 - 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 have played a major role in helping city growth. We must consider the use of TIFs and explore expanding it if beneficial to growth.

d. How would you improve the city's permitting and development process? We must take a deep dive into the process to see what is working and how to improve it.

- 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 advance pro-growth housing policy, as our city is struggling with stagnant housing supply. While I support inclusive zoning that increases density and affordability, I believe Council must also engage meaningfully with residents, using tools like task forces and amendments to ensure that growth respects local values and includes mandatory affordability and design safeguards.
- 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 are an essential tool for Cincinnati's growth, but they must be applied strategically and equitably. I believe they should prioritize housing, job creation, and development in underserved neighborhoods. This includes using tools like abatements, TIFs, and low-income housing tax credits. This approach allows us to grow our city while making sure all 52 neighborhoods share in the benefits.
- 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?** Cincinnati's economy thrives when young professionals and families feel welcomed, secure, and supported to build their futures here. City Council has a vital role in growing a skilled workforce and retaining top talent by ensuring equitable access to good-paying jobs across all neighborhoods, investing in affordable housing, expanding workforce development programs, and fostering safe, inclusive communities where people want to live and work.
- 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?** In the short term, I'd back community-led initiatives like the 30-day plan downtown around Government Square. Looking toward the long term, I'd continue to

emphasize community-oriented policing, drawing on my roots as one of the city's first COPs officers, and advocate for violence intervention and mental wellness programs, not simply relying on enforcement or overtime, but addressing root causes. Success would be measured through declines in violent crime rates and repeat offenses, and through residents' improved perceptions of safety and trust in their neighborhoods.

- 13. What is one concrete way you would engage business leaders to improve public safety outcomes, and how would you ensure accountability?** I would engage business leaders to improve public safety outcomes by convening targeted working groups. It is important to bring together the City Manager's office, law enforcement, neighborhood stakeholders, and local businesses to coordinate visible enforcement and prevention strategies. This focused collaboration ensures each stakeholder has clear roles, and success can be measured through reduced incidents, stronger deterrence, and enhanced communication.
- 14. Cincinnati's small businesses are the lifeblood of neighborhood business districts. How would you support long time and new small business entrepreneurs?** Businesses thrive when they have equitable access to good-paying jobs and the resources to grow. Our role is to ensure those opportunities reach underserved neighborhoods so that growth truly benefits everyone and all businesses.
- 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 existing barrier to growing small, minority- or women-owned businesses in Cincinnati is the lack of accessible resources and connections, particularly in underserved neighborhoods where entrepreneurs may struggle to navigate certification, contracting, or support networks. The City's role is to serve as a bridge-builder, which brings together resources to help entrepreneurs thrive and connects larger employers to overlooked neighborhoods in order to ensure that Cincinnati's economic growth benefits everyone.
- 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 believe Cincinnati should prioritize cultural and tourism investments that fuel neighborhood vibrancy, preserve local heritage, and expand opportunity. This includes revitalizing places such as the Emery Theatre and supporting citywide events like BLINK that draw visitors and engage communities. To pay for these, we can creatively leverage tools like TIF funding, carry-over dollars, and strategic public-private partnerships that drive impact without adding to taxpayers' burden.
- 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? As a person with deep roots in public service, I am always ready to engage with county, regional, state, and federal leaders, regardless of party, to advocate for Cincinnati's priorities, foster shared goals, and mobilize resources on our city's behalf.