

## **DONALD WASHINGTON**

### **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'm running to make City Hall work for every neighborhood—especially those too often overlooked. I've worked in public-facing operations and safety-related roles, built a small business, and volunteered in food security and youth support. That mix—hands-on operations, entrepreneurship, and community service—shapes a practical, no-excuses approach.

Accountability metrics (by end of term):

- Youth mental health: age-appropriate mental-health/trauma skills in 100% of CPS schools, counselor ratios trending toward national best practice; 10% reduction in chronic absenteeism and suspensions at pilot schools.
- Gun violence: city & partner buybacks and safe-storage drives removing 500+ firearms/year; 15% reduction in shooting incidents citywide (building on CPD's recent downward trend in shootings)
- Youth jobs: 2,000 paid placements/year through City/County programs and private partners; 70% of participants completing a credential, apprenticeship, or employment within 12 months.
- Small business: cut average permit/inspection times 30%; meet or exceed City SBE/MBE participation goals on City contracts.
- Affordable housing: leverage the Affordable Housing Leverage Fund (AHLF) to finance/preserve 2,000 units citywide with majority at ≤60% AMI

### **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?**

I'll push a formal implementation plan with quarterly dashboards and a Council work session every 90 days. My top three items:

1. Create an Office of Strategic Growth to own population/jobs/wage growth metrics.
2. Strategic site readiness fund (land assembly, brownfields, utilities) to make projects truly “shovel-ready.”
3. Talent & wage growth agenda focused on mid-skill credentials and employer partnerships.

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

Yes. Stand up a lean team (3–4 FTEs), publish KPIs (population, jobs, wages, housing permits) and coordinate across REDI, The Port, CPS/CTE, and Metro.

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

Any recommendation that increases structural costs without tying dollars to measurable growth (population/jobs/wages) and clear sunset/clawback provisions.

**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?**

Priorities: public safety (including co-responder models), youth mental health, street repair, neighborhood business districts, and housing production/preservation. Public safety is the majority of the General Fund; we must manage it smarter.

Savings: consolidate duplicative contracts; reduce overtime through better scheduling; expand alternative response (freeing sworn units for violent crime); aggressive vacant-building enforcement to cut nuisance costs.

Where to grow: site readiness, AHLF contributions, Youth2Work/H CJFS youth employment, and permitting modernization.

Tradeoffs: reprogram “waterfall” one-time surplus dollars toward housing/site readiness and permitting upgrades; tighten low-ROI subsidies.

**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?**

No, I do not support raising the earnings tax next term. Cincinnati's rate is 1.8%; the better path is growth and efficiency, not higher taxes on workers. If a future crisis arose, I'd require a public plan tying any proposal to time-limited uses and independent oversight.

**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—continue performance-based support for REDI, The Port, CincyTech, Cintrifuse, 3CDC, etc., with clear KPIs (jobs, wages, capital investment, inclusion).

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

Yes. Continue prioritizing AHLF in the surplus "waterfall" to scale affordable units and leverage private capital.

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

Launch a Strategic Site Readiness line item, partner with The Port for acquisition/brownfields, and align incentives to high-wage, export-oriented sectors.

**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. Our best opportunity is transit-oriented, corridor-based growth and infill near neighborhood business districts—exactly what Connected Communities kick-started. Pair that with faster permitting and a proactive talent strategy.

**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 support Connected Communities (effective July 1, 2024). Next: expand along additional corridors as data supports, allow ADUs by-right citywide, reduce remaining parking minimums near frequent transit, and enable more "middle housing" where appropriate.

**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?**

Actions now:

- Annual “zoning tune-up” to add corridors and remove friction points.
- Public land RFPs with affordability targets.
- Pre-approved infill plans & third-party plan review to cut timelines.
- Modernize e-permitting with published service-level targets.

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

If solid evidence shows production slowing, I’d restore/retarget abatements—time-limited, means-tested, and geographically tiered to avoid windfalls in hot markets (consistent with 2023 reforms).

**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?**

Use TIF for infrastructure/public improvements that unlock housing and jobs near NBDs and transit, with transparency, school-district coordination, and equity guardrails. Council should set citywide priorities and require project KPIs/clawbacks.

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

One-stop digital portal, third-party plan review, standardized checklists, and a public dashboard measuring time-to-permit and inspections.

**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?**

Council's responsibility is to meet citywide housing and population goals while listening early and often. I support robust engagement and Community Benefits Agreements, but not an informal "veto" over code-compliant projects that advance adopted plans. Connected Communities set the policy; we should implement it consistently.

**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?**

Incentives should be targeted, transparent, and performance-based—reserved for projects with high wages, export growth, apprenticeship/credential pipelines, and neighborhood revitalization with measurable community benefits. Clawbacks and public dashboards are mandatory.

**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 align funding with CPS Career-Technical Education, Cincinnati State pathways, and HCJFS youth/young-adult programs; reduce childcare and transit barriers; and co-fund fast credentials that move residents into family-sustaining jobs.

**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?**

Short term: focused deterrence for the small number driving violence; environmental fixes (lighting/blight); co-responder and trauma teams; beat-integrity and hotspot deployment. Implement a gun buyback program. Less guns on the streets equal to safer streets by default. Long term: youth mental-health classes, paid jobs, mentoring, and safe-storage campaigns. Success measures: fewer shootings & homicides, faster 911/response times, higher clearance rates, and improved community trust metrics. (Shootings have recently trended down; we must sustain it.)

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

Launch a Public Safety Business Compact: employers adopt nearby blocks (lighting/cameras with privacy rules, safe-passage routes for youth jobs), fund internships for at-risk teens, and report quarterly outcomes (incidents, hiring, retention).

**14. Cincinnati's small businesses are the lifeblood of neighborhood business districts.**

**How would you support long time and new small business entrepreneurs?**

- Faster starts: streamline OpenCincy permitting/inspections; publish turnaround SLAs.
- Capital & contracts: expand micro-grants/forgivable loans in NBDs; help firms certify and hit SBE/MBE goals; enforce prompt-pay.

**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?**

Barrier: Access to capital/bonding and complex procurement.

City's role: bonding assistance, unbundled contracts, outreach & technical help for certification, and plain-language RFPs—plus enforceable inclusion goals with real-time dashboards.

**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?**

Prioritize high-impact events and institutions that drive visitors and neighborhood vibrancy. Fund with transient occupancy/short-term rental revenues, competitive grants, and private sponsorships—while keeping a small, nimble City special-events fund.

**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'll work across party lines with Hamilton County, JobsOhio/REDI, OKI, CPS and higher-ed, our federal delegation, and philanthropy. Every joint effort will have clear deliverables (sites ready, units financed, credentials earned, jobs created) and public scorecards.