

Questions for City of Georgetown City Council

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Position Seeking: Georgetown City Council District 4

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1. Why do you want to serve on Georgetown City Council?

As a resident of Georgetown since 1994, I've grown increasingly concerned about a number of issues:

- The city's drive to reduce residents to "customer" roles. A city is not a business. It is a community of people who delegate management of their city through a city council and ceremonial mayor. We should not be "sold" anything, or "marketed to".
- Lack of transparency about city decisions. Residents and businesses should be able to find out why things are done, whether or not they share the ideology of the mayor and council.
- Poor ethics highlighted by the bullying of elected officials, city staff, local business owners, and residents. That I know of, no council person has called out the mayor on his behavior.
- Our current council appear unwilling to seek out professional guidance or listen to the experts. The District 4 incumbent sat on Georgetown Utility System Advisory Board throughout the entire process of committing the city to futures trading. He surely knew the board did not have enough diversity for meaningful guidance, ignored advice from at least one board member to get professional guidance, and should have known enough to ask the right questions. The pattern of approving GUS staff recommendations without adequate review was repeated when routing of a waste water line through Berry Springs Park was approved.
- Tighten Up the Purse Strings. The energy gamble is but one example of frivolous spending of our money.

2. What should the City of Georgetown's role be in Economic Development?

Georgetown is going to grow because of Austin's growth, so anything spent on economic development need to be justified. Numerous studies of other cities question the value/payback of incentives for recruiting new businesses. Our company did not need enticement to move, and since then Georgetown has subsidized ventures that should not have been.

3. What is your vision for quality Economic Development in Georgetown?

Organic development by those already in Georgetown, or those who will live here, and reinvest profits. Absentee business ownership should be discouraged, and prevented, to the degree allowed by law.

The 2030 plan for the city to take a proactive stance versus a regulatory one for new development requires expertise that Georgetown does not have, and is not big enough to maintain.

4. What is the biggest infrastructure gap facing Georgetown over the next three years?

Traffic congestion as seen on Williams Drive, SH 195, SH 29, and Leander Road. There has been little mitigation despite the fees that have been collected. Sadly, the joke made by one of the incumbent councilmen about "good" cities only being 10 years behind is being practiced here.

5. What is the biggest infrastructure gap facing your district in Georgetown?

District 4 residents are all in Sun City, where infrastructure needs are largely met. But getting into, or out of, Sun City requires traveling on Williams Drive or SH 195, both of which are becoming too congested for senior citizens to safely navigate.

6. Across the country, cities have passed regulations requiring small businesses to pay a higher minimum wage and/or requiring businesses to offer paid sick leave. What is your view on the City of Georgetown adopting similar ordinances that could impact the daily operations of businesses?

Any ordinances along those lines that Georgetown might pass would be overturned at the state level. That being said, businesses that do not pay living wages, provide health insurance, etc. are subsidized by the rest of Georgetown because of what it costs to indirectly pay for emergency room services, charity, debt forgiveness, etc.

Issues of the working poor cannot be solved by simple, governmental actions—it will require efforts like the Georgetown Project that are fully non-partisan and voluntary. Treating “all kids as our kids” would go a long way toward making Georgetown a better place. Last, but not least, if a business person cannot afford to pay living wages, how do they justify being in business?

7. The public input of the 2030 plans identified the city taking a larger role in health and human services. Where does this fit as a priority?

Compared to other cities, Georgetown has a disproportionate number of people who are working poor and/or retirees. Those people require extra health and human services that are tough to get. However, the city should not go into competition with private companies unless there are no suitable alternatives. Trying to do that would put Georgetown into the role of market forecasting, which the energy debacle proved foolish.

8. What opportunities do you see for Georgetown to work with other cities in Williamson County for regional solutions?

The first concern should be for the city to have a good working relationship with Williamson county. Maybe it is better than I realize, but if it was, no one would be talking about putting a parking garage within a block of the square—there is plenty of county land that could be leased long term near the library.

Regardless of common problems, Georgetown should be cooperating with adjacent communities where possible instead of duplicating infrastructure and competing to provide services.

That being said, there is an immediate need to work with Liberty Hill and address possible discharge into the South San Gabriel River.

9. How can Georgetown monitor land use to ensure housing meets the needs of the workforce?

The revised Georgetown 2030 planning initiative is impressive, and provides an umbrella for housing. A strong Planning and Zoning commission that is actively monitored and directed by elected officials will be a critical part of managing growth that:

- does not impact quality of life for those already in Georgetown, and
- does not cost current tax payers.

That spirit is repeated throughout the revised 2030 plan, and was in the previous version. However, the development boom along Williams and SH 29, along with the attendant congestion, do not speak well of the plan's execution.

10. What is the biggest concern you have heard from businesses and how do you plan to address these concerns?

I have not canvassed businesses throughout Georgetown, but have heard complaints about rents becoming so high around the square that only restaurants and bars can make it. If that is the case, we might slide into the square becoming a version of Austin's 6th Street. That might generate revenues, but nobody visits 6th Street during the daytime!