

Questions for City of Georgetown City Council

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Position Seeking: Re-Election to City Council, District 4 Representative

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

Georgetown is the best place Gina and I have ever lived, and we have lived in a lot of good places. Georgetown didn't get this way by accident. It took a lot of work, by a lot of folks, over a long period of time, to make Our Town what it is today. I am now fully retired. I don't have "an agenda" nor do I have any sort of vendetta to resolve or special interest to represent by serving on the City Council. What I have is time to contribute, a base of experience, an open mind, a willingness to learn, and a personal promise to do my part to keep Georgetown wonderful — and just maybe make it even better. That, to me, is what this is all about and that is why I want to continue to serve on our City Council.

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

The City should encourage as well as provide incentives to recruit, retain, and even grow economic activities that benefit our residents and current businesses. In doing so the City should reward performance, not promises. Incentives, when they are offered, should be based on such things as jobs added and/or economic activity generated and retained over time. The city should not offer land, spec buildings, or similar "pre-development" incentives.

It is paramount that the City keep the following principles in mind when making decisions on economic development: (1) It is better, and often easier, to retain existing businesses than it is to recruit new ones; (2) There is no "one size fits all" for commercial activity, the City must have sensible flexibility in its approach to economic development; (3) The City must be actively engaged in the economic development process, not sit idly while opportunities pass us by.

Given these guiding principles, the City should be willing to: establish partnerships with businesses to build infrastructure; negotiate various building and other standards/requirements to tailor projects to meet the needs of both businesses and Our Town (Special Use Permits, Planned Unit Developments, MUDs, etc.); make prudent use of tax policies (e.g., Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones) to reinforce success; and, make a special effort to retain current businesses that is at least as aggressive as efforts to recruit new ones.

Question-3: What is your vision for quality Economic Development in Georgetown?

I'll begin by repeating the first sentence from the previous question: *"The City should encourage as well as provide incentives, to recruit, retain, and even grow economic activities that benefit our residents and current businesses."* When I was first assigned to GEDCO the corporation's focus was on recruiting and retaining manufacturing companies. Shortly after I joined GEDCO, we added "retail" to the mix and, when David Morgan arrived, we conducted a Retail Study to focus our efforts. I also argued, successfully, to add a third component, "Medical", to the list of economic development objective areas .

Along the way we have gradually shifted our wage-target from the \$20/hour range to more in the range of \$25 - \$35 per hour. Taken together, I believe the Economic Development Triad of Manufacturing, Retail and Medical, and our higher wage targets, suit the needs of Our Town very well and should be continued.

Question-4: What is the biggest infrastructure gap facing Georgetown over the next three years?

Every Council decision is shaped by concerns over "growth". You have to stay ahead of growth, otherwise it will overrun you and you will lose control of your destiny. But if you get too far ahead of it, especially in terms of infrastructure, you can incur a tax burden which will deter the very growth for which you are planning. The task is to build a bridge to the future, not a plank you walk to your financial ruin.

We have a good handle on most of our infrastructure, especially water, wastewater, and electricity. Our policy framework is to have "growth pay for growth" by passing a substantial portion of the cost of infrastructure to the future population who will benefit from that infrastructure rather than burdening existing residents and businesses. As such, I support and I have played a leadership role in the following: (1) increasing Impact Fees for new-construction utility connections; (2) using debt financing for large projects rather than using cash funding; (3) structuring Development Agreements so developers pay for roads, sidewalks, lighting, parks (etc.), as well as setting aside land for eventual City Services (fire stations, schools, etc.).

My major concern, with regard to infrastructure, is transportation — specifically roads. Our East-West transit routes on the West side of IH-35 are constrained by Lake Georgetown and by existing development. Williams drive is especially problematic. We are pursuing several options to alleviate the traffic problems including: implementing the recommendations of the Williams Drive Corridor Study; adding North-South transit corridors (e.g., SW Bypass, Rivery Extension, etc.); and dispersing commercial development to "bring retail to the customer" rather than building roads to take the customer to retail activities.

Question-5: What is the biggest infrastructure gap facing your district in Georgetown?

Traffic congestion on Williams Drive. I have supported various projects to add to the North-South flow of traffic, which will take the load off Williams Drive. These include the Southwest Bypass and the Rivery Extension. I have personally worked to encourage and advance commercial development in the area of the intersection of Williams Drive and Ronald Reagan Blvd in order to cause traffic to head west on Williams Drive rather than east — thus further alleviating the traffic flow along this crucial avenue. Timing the traffic lights on Williams Drive has proved extremely useful as well.

Question-6: Across the country, cities have pass regulations requiring small businesses to pay a higher minimum wage and/or require 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?

In my opinion, employee wages are a matter between the business and the employee. However, the City can be a useful player in the wage-arena by recruiting and retaining businesses which pay high wages in all three of our target categories (Manufacturing, Retail and Medical). In general, higher wage positions also offer more comprehensive benefits. The City should also pay its employees well and offer competitive benefits.

Question-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?

I was a leading advocate of adding “Medical” to the mix of target economic activities for our Georgetown Economic Development Corporation (GEDCO). (Please see Question-3, above, for more detail.) I support recruiting medical research firms, a variety of medical and health care providers, and expanding our Assisted Living capabilities. I have also been working for several years to bring an in-patient, residential setting, Hospice facility to Georgetown. That is my primary long-term goal for my service on the City Council.

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

There are certainly opportunities to pool assets for critical-function, low frequency activities, such as Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams — this is already in place and should be expanded and supported as appropriate to our regional security environment. The key is to focus on high cost, critical, and low frequency activities — best described as capabilities where “you don’t need it very often, but when you need it, you have to have it, right now....”.

The same can be said of training programs in such areas as police, fire and EMS or other emergency services mutual-support agreements. There are undoubtedly other general areas where collaboration would be possible, and productive. I would be open to any such discussion.

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

Let's first appreciate that there is a major difference between "Affordable Housing" and "Making Housing Affordable". "Affordable Housing" is an arena where one must begin by identifying a target population (e.g. 50% of AMI, elderly, etc.) and then determine what is "counted" in determining affordability (i.e., what counts as income, what counts as expense, and what percentages determine something to be affordable, or not). These are difficult, contentious determinations and most of the data I have seen indicates that few, if any, cities have enough "Affordable Housing" no matter how that term is defined.

In my experience "Affordable Housing" is a laudable, but elusive, objective — with "the projects" in major cities often being prime examples of fraud by investors, waste of taxpayer monies and abuse of a disadvantaged population. I have found, also through personal hands-on experience, that when "Affordable Housing" is provided by private, not-for-profit organizations who work in collaboration with local governments, the monies are well spent and the residents benefit considerably. I support those sorts of arrangements, and I aggressively support programs that lead to home-ownership, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Now let's skip to "Making Housing Affordable" because it is a more achievable goal, and I do believe Georgetown's City government has a role to play there. Specifically, we can make housing more affordable by carefully monitoring and adjusting building standards — e.g., allowing residential construction on smaller lot sizes or adjusting or eliminating nonessential construction requirements. In general terms, the City needs to be attentive to inputs from developers that would allow them to build quality homes at lower prices — and to adjust the "rules" accordingly, and expeditiously.

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

Time is money. The City should make the rules clear, well ahead of time, and stick to the rules — don't be changing things mid-stream or on a whim. Finally, be prompt when processing applications or other requests from businesses. I'll repeat: Time is money.