CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

To help our followers better navigate the local election scene and understand where each candidate stands with regard to a range of important issues that affect local sustainability, Sustain Charlotte, in partnership with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Climate Leaders coalition, surveyed candidates running for the offices of Charlotte City Council and Charlotte Mayor.

Questions were emailed to all the candidates who filed their candidacy with Mecklenburg County and who have provided their email addresses.

RESPONSES

Here are the responses we received verbatim as submitted by the candidates. We did not make any alterations to the wording of the submitted responses, so the original spelling/grammar is preserved. We did edit the format of the responses so that the paragraphs appear uniform.

As a 501(c) 3 organization, we cannot endorse candidates, but we can inform you of where the candidates stand on issues that we think are important.

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QUESTION #1 (Planning and Development)

Over the past few years, Charlotte has adopted a number of planning and development plans and policies, including the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Going forward, the Charlotte City Council will be responsible for overseeing rezoning efforts and making any necessary amendments to the UDO.

The UDO is informed by the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, an important vision that will shape the equitable growth of our city, livability, and our climate resilience. For the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan goals to be realized, city council will need to uphold the requirements in the UDO, approve text amendments that are in line with the 2040 Plan, and deny rezoning requests that allow the rules to be skirted.

Will you honor the work that has been done to create this plan and ordinance? What will you do to ensure consistent implementation of the UDO and adoption of text amendments necessary to keep its implementation aligned with the goals of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan?

MAYOR RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Misun Kim (R, Mayor):
Kim has not responded.

Vi Lyles (D, Mayor)(i):
Lyles has not responded.

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“When elected I will certainly acknowledge and respect the work that has gone into creating the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). I want to understand the community's needs, the rationale behind the plan, and the goals it aims to achieve. To ensure consistent implementation of the UDO and alignment with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan goals, I will consider the following steps:

Engage with Stakeholders: I will engage with community members, experts, and stakeholders to understand their perspectives and concerns. This will help me to find common ground and make informed decisions.
Evaluate Amendments: It's important for me to carefully review proposed text amendments to the UDO. I will assess whether these changes are consistent with the broader vision and goals of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Prioritize Equitable Growth: I shall prioritize equitable growth and community well-being in my decision-making. This involves considering the impact of rezoning requests on different neighborhoods and demographics.

Evaluate Rezoning Requests: When reviewing rezoning requests, I shall evaluate whether they align with the rules and spirit of the UDO. Approving rezoning requests that undermine the plan's goals might compromise its effectiveness.

Transparency and Communication: Maintain transparency by explaining my decisions to constituents and providing clear justifications for my votes. Effective communication fosters trust and keeps the public informed about the reasoning behind policy choices.

Flexible Adaptation: While respecting the core goals, recognize that circumstances may change over time. Flexibility in adapting to new information or emerging challenges while still maintaining the plan's overall vision is important.

Seek Expert Advice: Consult with urban planning and development experts to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of decisions on the city's growth, livability, and resilience.

Ultimately, while I may not agree with every detail, my responsibility lies in representing the best interests of the community and city as a whole. Balancing my perspectives with the greater good is key to successful governance.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“I am opposed to central planning and government choosing winners and losers. As well intentioned as it might be, it inevitably leads to poor outcomes and missed goals. I would advocate for and work toward providing each respective community the appropriate support to allow their residents to prosper and thrive. There are many opportunities to do this in a way that is sustainable for our planet and for the people living there, including fostering economic opportunity and driving down living costs.”

AT-LARGE RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Dimple Ajmera (D, At-Large)(i):
Ajmera has not responded.

**Ben Copeland (D, At-Large):**
Copeland has not responded.

**Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):**
“While I don’t like everything in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, we need a steady hand at the wheel if the benefits to the city are to be realized. The UDO is a huge step in the right direction for land use policy, but its only the first step down a better path. For our Charlotte to prosper the continuing liberalization of zoning must move forward. Efforts to backslide into policies of the past, such as exclusionary zoning, need to be resisted.”

**Charlene Henderson (D, At-Large):**
Henderson has not responded.

**John X. Henny (D, At-Large):**
Henny was unreachable.

**James “Smuggie” Mitchell (D, At-Large)(i):**
Mitchell has not responded.

**LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):**
“I have challenges with the adopted plan due how it has created the space for displacement of working class residents.”

**Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):**
“Given that the UDO is a regulatory document, consistent adherence to it is enforced by the court system. The work of Council is to evaluate whether or not what's in the UDO is consistent with the city's 2040 plan, and whether or not the 2040 plan is consistent with the will of the majority of constituents. I'm absolutely committed to ensuring the residents drive this conversation, and that we honor their wishes. I do that by engaging, listening, and thoughtfully evaluating each text amendment as well as each potential change to policy, whether a rezoning, a street map update, or other.”
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“I would continue to support the planning process for Charlotte’s future. The UDO is a living document and should be amended when necessary to prevent unintended results. Continue to educate the public, developers and even council members regarding the new planning document.”

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Tiwana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“I absolutely will honor the work done to create the UDO & 2040 plan! One of my favorite aspects of the 2040 plan is the inclusion of community feedback. Having met with people within District 3, I've learned that there is alignment between community needs and the 2040 Plan's Vision Goals *and* there is concern about the execution of tactics used to reach those goals. As a city councilperson, I'll be keeping in close contact with the community to dig deeper into the "how" we go about reaching these goals in a way that preserves the spirit of the multiple rich communities within the district & the city. I will also work to make residents aware of their opportunities for input and participation in the Community Area Planning phases.”

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.
DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Wil Russell (D, District 4):
“I will honor the work that was done to create the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the UDO because it will help us develop into the city that we want to become. Our previous growth pattern was costly and unsustainable. Charlotte needs to adopt smart growth policies that will allow us to grow in a more predictable way. I also want to ensure that we are constantly reviewing and refining the UDO to meet the needs of our growing city. Finally, I will commit to explaining the UDO to the residents of District Four to help further their understanding of the ordinance.”

Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“Yes, I will honor the UDO I will work with community leaders and fellow council members to make necessary changes to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), especially to fight gentrification and protect our established neighborhoods.”

DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“The UDO and the 2040 Vision Plan, decade in the making, are extremely important and valuable Policies in shaping, preserving Charlotte's future; environmentally, equitable economically & growth. I will support the UDO Policies and 2040 Vision while holding our City Staff, myself and our Council to adhering to them and as these are "Living Documents", ensuring we make amendments where corrections are needed to be sure our futures are preserved and protected wherever and whenever possible for the best quality of life for every Charlotte Resident.”

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.
DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“The UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) is not just a static document but crafted as a dynamic, living entity that responds and evolves according to the shifting needs of our community. Therefore, it's essential to focus on comprehensive zoning regulations evaluations regularly. We must be proactive in ensuring we are not merely reacting to issues but anticipating and pivoting to these unintended consequences in real time, safeguarding the best interests of Charlotte and its residents. As the City Council Representative for District 6, my commitment is unwavering. I pledge to stay apprised of the emerging opportunities and challenges, ensuring our UDO remains relevant and practical. Engagement will be at the core of my leadership focus through fostering open dialogues with our residents, building solid coalitions with business leaders, and working cohesively with my colleagues and city staff. I am confident that we can navigate the complexities of city planning and formulate solutions that are both innovative, sustainable, and beneficial for all zip codes.

Charlotte's growth and prosperity rely on our collective efforts, and I am committed to leading our city toward stronger more sustainable today and in the future.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #2 (Strategic Mobility Plan)

In June 2022, City Council adopted the **Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP)** to help realize the vision laid out in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. One of the main tenets of the SMP is a 50-50 mode-share goal to balance mobility choices so residents need not depend on a car for transportation.

In order to fulfill the goals laid out in the SMP, a major, dedicated source of revenue is needed and a countywide “One Cent for Mobility” sales tax has been suggested to reach our mobility goals. However, there has been little visible progress on moving this forward, even as federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill creates time-sensitive opportunities for our area to compete for federal dollars that will require a local match.

**Do you support the need to secure a local funding source to realize the goals laid out in the SMP? If so, what will you do as an elected official to move the process forward in a transformational rather than incremental way? If not, what do you propose as an alternative to support mobility for all residents?**

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**MAYOR RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN**

**Misun Kim (R):**

Kim has not responded.

**Vi Lyles (D)(i):**

Lyles has not responded.

**Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):**

“Supporting a dedicated local funding source, such as the "One Cent for Mobility" sales tax, could indeed be beneficial for realizing the goals of the Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) and reducing car dependence. As the Mayor, advocating for this funding source could involve:

Public Awareness: Raising awareness about the importance of the SMP and the proposed funding source among residents, highlighting the benefits of reduced congestion, improved transportation options, and a more sustainable city.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engaging with community members, businesses, and advocacy groups to gather support and address concerns about the funding source.
Involving stakeholders in the decision-making process can build a more comprehensive and inclusive plan.

Collaboration: Working closely with City Council members to build consensus and garner support for the funding proposal. Collaboration within the government is essential for successful implementation.

Federal Funding Opportunities: Leveraging federal funding opportunities from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill by ensuring that the local funding source aligns with federal requirements, thus maximizing the chances of securing federal dollars for the SMP.

Transparent Communication: Ensuring transparent communication with the public about the benefits of the funding source, the progress being made, and how the funds will be allocated for mobility improvements.

Innovation and Partnerships: Exploring innovative partnerships with private companies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions to enhance mobility options and generate additional funding streams.

Long-Term Vision: Presenting a compelling long-term vision of a transformed city with diverse and sustainable transportation options that improve the quality of life for all residents.

Ultimately, supporting a local funding source aligned with the SMP can help drive transformative change in a more holistic and impactful manner, ensuring a sustainable, accessible, and efficient transportation system for Charlotte's residents.

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“I do not support any tax increases. Mobility is only a problem insofar as it concerns one's ability to get where s/he needs to be. I know that sounds obvious, and ridiculous, but indulge me for a moment :), as this ties into affordable housing, too. If your job is walking distance, and the things you need are in close proximity, your need for longer-distance mobility is lessened. Zoning restrictions that are flexible only when big Donor developers ask, along with onerous occupational licensing requirements, on top of the absurdly high costs of starting a business, create an insurmountable barrier to entry for people to invest in the neighborhoods where they live. Instead, they face long commutes through ever-more-congested traffic with increasingly expensive fuel costs. Remote work is an attractive option, but the people who are able to work from home
tend to have jobs with more income security (though inflation has put all but the most wealthy on tenuous financial ground). There are smart investments that can alleviate transportation and financial burden, improve neighborhoods, and bring about prosperity in a sustainable way. I am against taxing to increase spending, but I recognize that not everyone feels the same, and I will be the mayor for everyone. While I work to implement structures that incentivize prosperity for all of Charlotte, I believe there are opportunities for the city to hasten this transformation, and point it in the right direction. Two things, in particular, that I would focus on are:

1. Expanding the greenways. We have a beautiful greenway system. It makes the city prettier, encourages pride and personal investment, gives trees and tree canopy a guaranteed place to persist and expand, encourages exercise and socialization, and - if done right - creates a completely carbon-free and healthy way to commute.

2. Improve bus stations with solar panels. We have something like 60 bus routes with just under 3000 bus stops. One of my top priorities would be to work with utility companies to get coverage at every bus stop with solar panels on top. I would also want to plant two trees at every stop, as practical (this plan is more complicated, so forgive my lack of nuance in this space - I am trying to convey the intent, if not all the details). People would be able to use the bus system more comfortably without exposure to the elements. Meanwhile, the solar panels would contribute to the grid overall, and the power generated could be distributed to lower people's energy bills. They could help in re-charging EV, and even contribute to community garden development (another one of my key initiatives). Potentially, we could even explore installing heating and/or cooling that the panels power, but that is tricky, as solar panels are weather dependent and the heating might tax the grid on cloudy, blustery days."

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**AT-LARGE RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN**

**Dimple Ajmera (D)(i):**
Ajmera has not responded.

**Ben Copeland (D):**
Copeland has not responded.

**Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):**
“I am not in favor of raising taxes and don't think a tax hike is needed to achieve the goals of the SMP. Better budgeting and more efficient operations would see better returns on the public's money. While transformational progress is something many
would like, in a complex system incremental progress is more obtainable. However, that doesn't mean city policy makers can delay and take a lot of time. An effective and dependable mobility infrastructure is needed for Charlotte and the people to grow and prosper respectively."

Charlene Henderson (D, At-Large):
Henderson has not responded.

John X. Henny (D, At-Large):
Henny was unreachable.

James “Smuggie” Mitchell (D, At-Large)(i):
Mitchell has not responded.

LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):
“There is a level of privilege in this plan in regards to who has access to bank accounts, credit cards and smart phones to utilize mode-share. I support FREE bus fare for all residents to remove the barrier of a "Honor System" for rail &. immediate pay for the bus."

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):
“Yes, I support the need to secure a local funding source; not only for our county, but across our region. Any meaningful transportation plan must stretch beyond our county limits. In order to do that, we must engage our surrounding counties and gain buy-in to a broader vision, which is the only way we will be granted permission to pursue local funding by the General Assembly. This discussion has to include a regional transit authority structure.”

DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“I support the one cent for mobility to support local and regional projects. This local funding would allow as tap into federal dollars to reach local goals.”

**Gary Young (D, District 2):**
Young has not responded.

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**DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN**

**Tiawana Brown (D, District 3):**
Brown has not responded.

**Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):**
“I would support local funding for efforts related to the SMP. In general, I believe that Charlotteans are supportive of local funding for initiatives that will improve infrastructure in ways that benefit their daily lives and I see this as no exception. I would also support exploring ways to incorporate microtransit options to provide service in areas where residents would be better served by more flexible modes of transportation.”

**Warren Turner (D, District 3):**
Turner has not responded.

**James Bowers (R, District 3):**
Bowers was unreachable.

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**DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN**

**Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):**
Johnson has not responded.

**Wil Russell (D, District 4):**
“I do support the need to secure a local funding source for improvements in our transit systems. The citizens of Charlotte should have more transportation choices. However, securing a local funding source will not be enough to create the transformational change envisioned by the Strategic Mobility Plan. To create those transformational transportation choices, city council will need to work with the General Assembly to secure the necessary state funding.”
Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“I fully support the Strategic Mobility Plan.”

DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“I will fully support the necessity to secure funding and utilizes funding sources; whether locally, state level and federally to move our Strategic Mobility Plan forward. I believe we can accomplish these goals if politics are taken out as much as possible, solutions are made through equity lens for All; including funding found, doesn't place an undue burden on our Residents who fully depend on Public Transportation. Our Residents deserve reliable public transportation that includes shorter ride times, more transit locations, realistic viable alternative mobility modes. If elected to represent our City Council District 5, an area that truly depends on Public Transportation for employment opportunities and entertainment access, I will familiarize myself and whenever given the opportunity seek out ways to accomplish SMP goals as reality rather than future visions.”

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.

DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“I am confident in securing local, philanthropic, and other sourced funding to realize the Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP) goals. I will continue the work of the Coalition building to discover funding to assist the city’s ability to address our community’s unique transportation and mobility needs. As an elected official, I will advocate for enhancing the things that are working and be a part of the solutions that lead to transformational change. For example, it is essential to achieve transformational change to Engage Stakeholders through Town Hall meetings and Public Forums to hear input from our
residents, business owners, and community leaders to ensure my hands are on the pulse of our community’s priorities. Explore Diverse Funding Options such as public-private partnerships, state and federal grants, etc., so that we are not putting financial strain on our residents. Finally, continuous communication with our residents, business leaders, and community leaders and evaluating how we accomplish our goals hold us accountable. Our ability to move throughout Charlotte and our regional cities is paramount to our sustainable growth and viability into the next two decades.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #3 (Vision Zero)
In 2018 Charlotte adopted a Vision Zero goal to end traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. CDOT staff are working with Vision Zero Task Force members to achieve this goal.

What investments and/or policy changes, including funding for mobility in the CIP, do you believe are most important for Charlotte to fulfill its commitment to Vision Zero and ensure that our streets are safe and well-connected for people of all ages and abilities to walk, bike, and ride transit?

MAYOR RESPONSES - VISION ZERO

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“To fulfill its commitment to Vision Zero, Charlotte should prioritize investments in safer infrastructure such as improved crosswalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly intersections. Policy changes should focus on lowering speed limits, enhancing public transit options, and implementing stricter enforcement of traffic rules. Adequate funding in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for these measures is crucial to ensure safer streets and improved mobility for all residents.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“I see no viable path to reducing traffic fatalities to zero without ceasing traffic function and that is not a realistic goal worth spending public time and dollars to chase in futility.”

AT-LARGE RESPONSES - VISION ZERO

Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):
“Vision Zero is a goal I support. More investment in creating safe and consistent paths for bikes and pedestrians is needed. Policy makers needs to re-think how it connects sidewalks and bike paths. Currently the costs of public works is too high. There are no incentives and few mechanisms in place to keep the cost of building bike paths, sidewalks, and other transit options to a reasonable level. This hurts the ability of the public sector to provide the services and infrastructure many people depend on. Reforms are needed to achieve the goals of Vision Zero.”
LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large):  
“I would like to see the funding request from the community in regards to Vision Zero to see what funding should be allocated through the CIP.”

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):  
“I’m very proud to have led the policy change to eliminate the need for property owner signatures in order to install traffic calming devices in areas that met the thresholds. In addition to CIP mobility funding, I have been pushing to lower the thresholds for traffic calming in denser, pedestrian oriented parts of the city (speed humps, speed limits, stops signs)."

DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO

Dante Anderson (D, District 1):  
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2):  
Graham has not responded.

Gary Young (D, District 2):  
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO

Tiwana Brown (D, District 3):  
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):  
“I see increasing the safety of existing streets as well as the number of sidewalks and pedestrian crossings as the most important investments we can make toward our Vision Zero goal. One of the concerns I’ve heard from folks in my district is that there simply are not enough sidewalks in general followed by existing pedestrian pathways being in various levels of disrepair. It is also important to increase lighting as a safety measure
along roadways and sidewalks so that these paths are more appropriate for regular use."

**Warren Turner (D, District 3):**

Turner has not responded.

**James Bowers (R, District 3):**

Bowers was unreachable.

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**DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO**

**Renee Johnson (D, District 4):**

Johnson has not responded.

**Wil Russell (D, District 4):**

“To fulfill the goals established by the adoption of Vision Zero, I would like to see our streets move from car centric design standards to multimodal design standards. Our streets should be designed to encourage shared uses that are safe for bicycles and pedestrians. I would also like to see more investment into protected bike lanes and an expansion of the bicycle network across the city. Upgrades and changes to crosswalks and crosswalk signals are also necessary to meet the goals of Vision Zero.”

**Olivia Scott (D, District 4):**

“The Vision Zero Goals are essential to Charlotte’s future quality of life. We must improve and maintain a full transportation safety plan that includes aggressive Sidewalk construction, pedestrian focused crosswalks, and sensible bike paths. This is urgent for District 4.”

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**DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO**

**Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):**

“City’s Annual Budget must realistically reflect Vision Zero’s Mission and Goals set forth by the Vision Zero Task Force and supported by City Manager and City Council. The infrastructure currently in City of Charlotte is lacking on so many levels. The needs for implementation and installation for viable options in order to create safe Streets, whether for Drivers, Pedestrians, Bicyclists are years behind in what the needs are Now. Funding must be in the top priority and focus in the City’s Annual Budget going forward. The funding for sidewalks alone, though City has increased funding some, if
continued as Today, it will take decades for our City Residents every area to benefit from what should be the standard rather than being considered an extra amenity; a wishful hope, if you will. As sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, dedicated pedestrian walkways along with an array of alternative transit options. I will add, any and all should be done in a a manner that is fully ADA applicable. Our ADA Residents have and continue to be left out in viable input to ensure their safety and manner to navigate around our City is included in all standards established for future Vision Zero infrastructure builds and development.”

**Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):**
Molina has not responded.

**Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):**
Reid has not responded.

**DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - VISION ZERO**

**Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):**
Bokhari has not responded.

**Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):**
“Vision Zero demonstrates Charlotte's commitment to the safety and well-being of all its residents. We must have a multifaceted strategy that looks at the data and pinpoint the causes of traffic accidents. Some vital areas of focus are Pedestrian Safety Enhancements, which should be made for better crosswalk signage and innovative crosswalk signals that are handicap accessible. Car Lanes and Bike Lanes: We must have funds to have car lanes alongside protected bike lanes and sidewalks to ensure safety for cyclists, walkers, and drivers. Public Transit: Expand and upgrade our present transit options: buses and light rail. Ensure they are timely, efficient, clean, and customer-friendly. Community Involvement: It will take the whole of our community to engage in the process of utilizing various options to transport residents to the places where they live, work, shop, and play. Policies: Implement stricter penalties for DUIs, distracted driving, and reckless driving, including Mandatory Training driving courses—or awareness sessions for license renewals.”

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Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #4 (Access to Parks and Greenways)

Although building parks and greenways is primarily the responsibility of Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte has partnered with Mecklenburg County to build the Cross Charlotte Trail and also supports access to parks and greenways by providing connectivity for people who bike, walk, and ride transit.

What would you do as an elected official to support residents’ access to outdoor recreational opportunities and greenways as part of the broader transportation network?

MAYOR RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):

“As Mayor I play a crucial role in supporting residents' access to outdoor recreational opportunities and greenways by advocating for and implementing various initiatives:

Promoting Funding: I will work to secure funding for the development, maintenance, and expansion of parks, greenways, and recreational facilities. This might involve seeking grants, collaborating with public and private partners, and allocating city resources effectively.

Community Engagement: Engaging with local communities to understand their needs and preferences for outdoor spaces and recreational facilities is essential. To hold town hall meetings, surveys, and public forums to gather input and ensure that plans align with residents' desires.

Policy Advocacy: Advocate for policies that prioritize the integration of greenways and recreational spaces into urban planning. This might involve zoning regulations that encourage the creation of parks and recreational facilities and promote walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods.

Collaborative Partnerships: Building partnerships with various stakeholders, including community groups, nonprofits, and neighboring jurisdictions, can help create a unified approach to expanding greenways and recreational opportunities.

Transportation Integration: As you mentioned, greenways can be part of the broader transportation network. As mayor I can work to ensure that greenways are integrated
with existing transit systems and bike infrastructure, making them accessible and convenient for residents.

Accessibility: As the mayor I can advocate for inclusive design principles, ensuring that greenways and recreational facilities are accessible to people of all abilities and ages.

Environmental Stewardship: As mayor I can champion environmentally friendly practices in the development and maintenance of green spaces, promoting sustainability and conservation efforts.

Education and Outreach: As mayor I can support educational campaigns about the benefits of outdoor recreation and green spaces for physical and mental well-being, fostering a culture of outdoor engagement.

Maintenance and Safety: Ensuring the ongoing maintenance and safety of greenways and recreational spaces is crucial. The mayor can allocate resources to keep these areas well-maintained and safe for residents to enjoy.

Public Events and Programs: As mayor I can encourage the organization of community events, outdoor activities, and wellness programs in parks and greenways to promote their use and create a sense of community.

By focusing on these initiatives, as mayor I can effectively contribute to enhancing residents’ access to outdoor recreational opportunities and greenways, making the city a more vibrant and healthy place to live.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“Herein lies one of the greatest fundamental flaws of a top-down, government-guided approach to governance. Those of us who reside in Charlotte are subject to the whims of an entity which has competing priorities. Why should Charlotte residents depend on approval from a central authority so far up to improve their neighborhoods? As I mention above, expanding the greenway system substantially is a priority for me. This is an inexpensive way to foster both beautification and exercise, to improve neighborhoods, to alleviate transportation burdens, and to expand tree coverage dramatically, especially when routing through areas that currently lack canopy coverage. As a second step, I would redirect money that, for example, is subsidizing a billionaire’s tennis court vanity project, toward community gardens. We are just a few generations removed from the knowledge and daily process of producing the food - healthy, nutritious, environmentally friendly, and financially sustainable - that we and our families needed to live. We have replaced that with processed junk pumped full of sugar and chemicals. Community
gardens, done right, cost only the initial investment setup amount. After that, they are fully self-sustaining. When they produce excessive amounts of food, they can even create an income source. Finally, as it made sense for different areas, I would support the development of parks, playgrounds, courts and fields, and other recreational facilities within walking distance from neighborhoods that are lacking them.”

**AT-LARGE RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS**

**Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):**
“I like the Cross Charlotte Trial and Charlotte's partnership with the County in connecting our parks and greenways. We need more collaboration with private organizations and neighborhoods to continue building out a robust network of interconnections. Many of these projects are prohibitively expensive, which keeps collaboration to a minimum. There are ways to introduce cost savings without compromising on quality. We can find those work-around solutions to continue the growth of the Cross Charlotte Trail network.”

**LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):**
“I will publicly support more greenway access to areas of the City that have little access for families and children to connect outside.”

**Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):**
“I consistently push for connectivity through the rezoning and development process. This is significant due to the number or rezonings we see in a growing city.”

**DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS**

**Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):**
Anderson has not responded.

**DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS**

**Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):**
“Continue to partner with Mecklenburg County to build additional trails and create more open space opportunities between the two governments.

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Tiwana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“As a member of the Charlotte Tree Advisory Commission I fully believe that our urban tree canopy protection and renewal is essential to Charlotte’s long-term health and livability. I will work with the County and State along with Community leaders to make sure every Charlotte neighborhood has access to outdoor recreational areas."

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.

DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“I think we can see a model of this in the current discussions around the future of the Eastland Yards development project. Requesting and supporting development projects with built-in greenspace or statement parks will help us increase access to these spaces by way of increasing availability.”
DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“District 5 is made up of Major City and State thoroughfares (Albemarle Road, WT Harris Blvd., Independence Blvd., just some of major examples) which in itself has created barriers for our Residents and Businesses. The needs for more connectivity in creating more Greenway Trails; Cross Country Trail is long overdue. These barriers have created economic, safety and health burdens for our Business Owners along our Corridors. These barriers have also created what I would refer to as safe outdoor recreational deserts for our Eastside. When outdoor recreational access isn't available, it has direct negative impacts for all our residents. Our Seniors, our Youth, our Families, etc. Given Residents across the board, easily accessibility to participate in positive outside amenities and opportunities directly impacts positive health outcomes. Though County is the responsible Government Body for Parks and Greenways, I believe, as City Government and City Council, we need to be better working Partners with our County counterparts to institute policies where any development and opportunities present to create, install and build connections to current and future greenways, trails and parks becomes the standard rather than almost an afterthought because the County has these under their purview. Too many times the needs of our Residents aren't accomplished because of the lack of a viable working relationship when possible between City and County.”

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.

DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“Greenways and parks are more than just recreational spaces; they represent our commitment to sustainable urban development, promoting physical well-being and environmental stewardship. As an elected official, I'm dedicated to making Charlotte not just a city of building but a city of vibrant green spaces that are interwoven seamlessly through our transportation fabric. If I am privileged to become your next city council
representative, I would actively seek federal and state grants that support urban greenway development and its integration into transportation systems. Additionally, I'd explore partnerships with the private sector, fostering a collaborative approach to funding these projects. I will also facilitate regular community engagement sessions to gather feedback and ideas on new greenway projects and their integration into the broader transport network. Finally, strengthen the collaboration between the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to pool our collaborative resources and talents to enhance the interconnections of our parks and greenways.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #5 (Bus Network)

CATS has undergone significant changes in this past year, which have resulted in reduced frequency of service on several bus routes. However, research shows that public transportation is most effective and successful when service is fast, frequent, and reliable.

What role should Charlotte City Council play in supporting CATS’ goal of increasing frequency on all core bus routes to run every 15 minutes or less and ensuring that CATS has the necessary resources to implement the recommendations identified in the Envision My Ride Bus Priority Study results?

MAYOR RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“The Charlotte City Council plays a crucial role in supporting CATS' goal of increasing bus frequency and ensuring sufficient resources. They can allocate funding for public transportation, collaborate with CATS to implement the Envision My Ride study's recommendations, and prioritize policies that promote fast, frequent, and reliable service. By creating a supportive regulatory environment and providing financial backing, the City Council can help CATS achieve its objective of improving public transportation for the community.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“CATS is a disaster. From end-to-end, with a management style that defies absurdity, ten years of declining utilization, repeated audits (which cost money) that found the same problems for years on end, employee morale in the dumpster, fundamentally flawed financials and zero transparency into where the money disappears, absolutely no accountability, serious safety concerns, inconsistent reliability, and no answers in sight, I do not think we should be looking to put more burden on a broken system. Before any talk of expanding CATS services, I would focus on fixing the mess that is CATS.”

AT-LARGE RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):
“Charlotte's bus system needs attention from our policy makers to be the public transit backbone a world class city deserves. Think of it, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on just four miles of street car in a highly developed and affluent part of town. I believe if those funds were spent on improving our bus system a lot of people would already be seeing the rewards and benefits of easier access to the rest of the city. I feel strongly that working people deserve better transit options than they currently have and will work to give the people what they deserve.”

LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):
“Council has limited role, if I was on the Transportation Committee I would advocate for stronger relationships with our regional partners to support comprehensive plan.”

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):
“This is a regional issue that requires development and planning be responsive to people's travel patterns. We need to make sure our transit plans connect to regional planning efforts led by the COG.”

DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“Council should retain a new bus operator to ensure dependable and reliable public transportation. In addition, we should invest in private police to protect drivers and passengers, and ensure a safe bus routes & station.”

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Tiwana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.
Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“We should continue to assess and prioritize efforts to properly staff CATS routes to enable more frequent trips across core routes which may include adjusting pay scales to attract and retain drivers and staff. To increase reliability, I'd love to see the city explore and pilot technologies that would allow buses to take priority in traffic along highly traveled routes.”

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.

DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Wil Russell (D, District 4):
“The first issue that needs to be addressed is driver safety. Our city needs to provide a safe working environment for all bus and light rail drivers. We also need to address the driver shortage issues facing our transit system as well. Additionally, we must also examine our transit system to ensure that it is reliable, safe, and convenient. We can do that by determining if our current system routes are efficient and reach the destinations riders are requesting. We also need to implement consistent operating hours for all our transit system options so that riders know when transit is available.”

Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“CATS must be safe, efficient and laser focused in neighborhoods that need it the most. If restructuring the management of CATS is required, then let us do so immediately.”

DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“District 5 is directly impacted in a negative manner because of the serious issues with CATS over the years. We have experienced the burdens of inefficiencies more than the majority of the rest of the City. CATS Must be held accountable for their responsibilities of providing SAFE, timely, efficient transportation for our Bus Routes, including improvements to the Bus Stops themselves,; Albemarle Rd./Central Avenue being one of the busiest in Charlotte. I also believe, East Charlotte that encompasses both District 5 and District 1 should be prioritized in having the promised Gold Line to be completed to Eastland Yards as promised and approved by City Council that for every mile to the West so to the East. East Charlotte should be afforded the same equitable opportunities for Transportation opportunities as every other area of Charlotte. The Gold Line should not be a “pipe dream” for East Charlotte, it must be done and we must be given a short timeline of accomplishing the completion. We as a City Council, if I am elected, must stop denying the Eastside the same equitable positive opportunities as provided in the areas of the current Gold Line and the Blue Line. All have created alternative transit besides CATS Buses, economic opportunities, employment opportunities and opportunities to travel to events and recreational activities.”

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.

DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“Public transportation is essential to a thriving city. It ensures accessibility, proactively reduces the carbon footprint, and promotes sustainable living and a better quality of life. It is imperative to actively seek federal and state grants and public-private partnerships that support transportation improvements. Because of the challenges of CATS and the realization that CATS manages the day-to-day operations, City Council representatives must be continuously asking the right questions and receiving consistent updates from CATS leadership to ensure strategic priorities and goals are being met while at the same time celebrating the successes of our front-line employees if I am privileged with the opportunity to represent the residents of Charlotte on City Council. I will illuminate to the public the benefits of using CATS through social media about new route changes
and pertinent updates about the Charlotte Transportation system. Given the spotlight of the challenges of CATS, we must act decisively to ensure our transportation remains a viable, efficient option for our residents.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - BUS NETWORK

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #6 (Strategic Energy Action Plan)

Although Charlotte has received much attention for winning Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge status and funding, the Environment Committee has been combined with other interests and its role has been minimized at a time when it should be highly active. Almost five years have already passed since the Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) was passed, and there has been little discourse around progress on the stated 2050 goals.

What actions will you take to ensure the SEAP goals and plan stay on course?

MAYOR RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“To ensure the SEAP goals and plan stay on course in Charlotte:

1. Reevaluate Committee Structure: Consider revisiting the decision to combine the Environment Committee with other interests. Reestablishing a dedicated committee focused on environmental matters could help prioritize climate goals.

2. Transparency and Communication: Facilitate regular and transparent communication about the progress on the 2050 goals. This could involve public updates, reports, and engagement with stakeholders.

3. Accountability Measures: Implement mechanisms to hold responsible parties accountable for the implementation of the SEAP. This could involve setting up performance indicators, regular reviews, and reporting mechanisms.

4. Resource Allocation: Allocate sufficient resources, including funding and personnel, to support the initiatives outlined in the SEAP. Adequate resources are crucial for successful execution.

5. Community Engagement: Engage the local community in discussions and decision-making processes related to climate goals. This could foster greater awareness, participation, and ownership of the initiatives.

6. Partnerships and Collaboration: Forge partnerships with other organizations, businesses, and government agencies to leverage expertise and resources in achieving the SEAP goals.
7. Regular Assessments: Conduct periodic assessments of progress against the SEAP goals. If adjustments are needed, make them based on data and changing circumstances.

8. Policy Integration: Integrate SEAP goals into broader urban planning and policy frameworks to ensure that climate considerations are incorporated into all relevant decision-making processes.

9. Innovation and Technology: Embrace innovative technologies and solutions that can accelerate progress toward the SEAP goals, making Charlotte a leader in sustainable practices.

10. Education and Awareness: Promote awareness and education campaigns to inform the public about the importance of the SEAP goals, encouraging a collective effort to achieve them.

Remember that sustaining long-term goals like the SEAP requires consistent effort, adaptability, and collaboration from various stakeholders.

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“The SEAP does two things that I particularly like. One, it identifies the problems that need to be addressed. Two, it relies on public / private partnership to address the problems, instead of heavy-handed mandates that hurt in so many ways but fail to achieve their intended outcomes. As I have outlined above, I will prioritize adding a significant solar element to the power grid, I will increase trees and canopy cover substantially, I will lessen the emissions burden of transportation by removing restrictions that create the need for longer transport times, and I will empower people to grow their own communities, which inevitably leads to neighborhoods that are safer, more prosperous, and more sustainable, and which maintain these characteristics over time. The biggest single source of emissions in Charlotte is the big buildings. While there is nuance around total emissions and emissions per capita, the fact remains that more emissions in our city come from that concentrated source than any other direct source. Fortunately, there are a number of ways buildings can be made significantly less carbon intensive. For one, supporting the building of more nuclear plants leads to carbon-free electricity. This is obviously a more distant solution and one that is outside the ambit of a mayor’s responsibilities, but there is always opportunity for influence. The sentiment carries through in my solar panels on bus stops plan. There is also significant opportunity to incentivize building owners, tenants, and managers to purchase offsets,

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which have become both affordable and reliable with technological advances (I wrote an article on this: https://owlesg.com/2023/04/21/the-case-for-ignoring-scope-3-emissions/). One idea I have, which I haven't fleshed out but am exploring, is finding areas in our city where we can sell offsets. If this is possible, we can generate revenue and have outside financing of things like tree plantings and our community gardens.”

**AT-LARGE RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):
“The goals of SEAP are obtainable, but they will require partnerships with local free enterprise to ensure the implementation of energy saving technologies that benefits the public and the city. My profession and experience in the construction industry has granted me familiarity with any energy saving technologies and I have a unique perspective that many in government simply don't have. It's a matter of connecting the dots and getting the right players into a room to coordinate their efforts, which is something I have done in the private sector and can do for the public too.”

LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):
“Your are correct, in the 10-months I have been back in office there has been little discussion on the SEAP. I look forward to discussing the 2050 goals in the future.”

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):
“We continue to receive periodic updates on SEAP progress. However, the intent is that our daily work incorporates the SEAP action items, and the 2040 Plan encompasses our goals. Many of the action items come in the form of budget approvals (the CMGC is currently undergoing comprehensive HVAC equipment and building envelope upgrades, for instance). We continue to ensure dedicated staff is working on not only internal initiatives but external partnerships with Duke Energy and others. We've recently hired staff to stand up a Workforce Development department, whose focus will in part be on building the talent pipeline for target energy industries. Finally, we received annual reports as a formal measure.”

**DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):
Anderson has not responded.
DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“Would support a stand alone Environment Committee so that this issues gets the full attention of council & the community.”

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Tiawana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“First, as a member of city council, I'd look for ways to revitalize the Environment Committee - we should be engaging leadership on all of our priorities as a city. I envision referring to the SEAP goals in a similar way to the UDO. The UDO combines regulations from multiple development areas and similarly we can use SEAP a lens for decision making across multiple development areas.”

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.

DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Wil Russell (D, District 4):
“I plan to review the status of SEAP to determine whether the plan has been successful. For those areas that have been proven to be successful, I would work to ensure we are putting the resources toward building on those successes. For those areas that have
had difficulties, I would like to revisit those policies and make the necessary changes to improve performance. I would also review emerging energy technologies to determine if they can help Charlotte stay on course for its 2050 SEAP goals.”

Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“SEAP goals must be fully measured and reported for progress to stay on track. Communication with the media and public regarding educational / progress updates are essential. Our Children and Grandchildren’s clean air and water is non-negotiable.”

DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“If elected to District 5, I believe, we as City Council must hold our City Staff and City Manager accountable for any and all Funding; whether the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge or Federal Grants Funding to be distributed in a transparent and accountable manner within a set timeframe. As City Council, we should be held accountable to ensuring City Staff to present at least quarterly to full Council at a Council Meeting where Residents too will hear and see if funds have been spent and if so where. If not, why and then Council must set timeframes for the funds to be spent, fully transparently, equitably and according to how the funds are directly & only meant to be spent. If this doesn't occur in this manner, 2050 stated goals will never be accomplished but there will be a whole lot of excuses with future Councils and Generations having to answer for the disastrous environmental impacts affecting quality of life with decisions and paths taken Today. Future Generations are gong to pay dearly with poor health and poor environmental conditions for our lack of due diligence now. I am further interested in exploring alternatives to CATS Buses such as the alternative transportation modals as discussed by CATS Staff in the recent months. Shorter and more direct transit provided by an alternative form. We must never forget in any of our City Transit Planning our underserved and too often ignored Disable and Homebound Residents so we need to constantly listen and hear from our Residents who this is there only transportation for their basic life necessities. Paratransit as well as our CATS Buses including our CATS Bus Stops must be equipped and ADA accessible everywhere needs to be prioritized to ensuring accessibility, ease and comfort for All our Riders.”

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.
**DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

**Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):**
Bokhari has not responded.

**Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):**
“Climate leaders throughout the county have shared that the 2023 Summer is the hottest in our history. Strategic Energy Action Plan that leads to environmental sustainability is a serious issue; It requires public-private-residence action. We celebrate that the Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge recognized Charlotte as a leader in this work. However, there is much work to complete. 1. I will advocate semi-annual updates on how we are doing in this area of our 2050 goals. 2. Engage in public-private - community Town Halls and forums to listen to experts in the field who have found sustainable and transformative results. The urgency of this work will shape the shaping of the following two generations, my children and grandchildren's generation. As a member of the City Council, I will advocate for updates on the successes and challenges of the city's SEAP goals.”

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**DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - STRATEGIC ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

**Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):**
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #7 (Food Security)

Access to fresh, healthy foods are of particular concern to many of our neighbors, particularly those in food deserts.

In keeping with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan’s goal of 10-minute neighborhoods, what will you do to ensure that residents have access to public gardens and healthy food in their neighborhood?

MAYOR RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“To promote access to fresh, healthy foods in line with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan's 10-minute neighborhood goal, I would consider initiatives like establishing community gardens, farmers markets, and urban farming projects. Collaborating with local organizations and all government entities can help create spaces where residents can grow produce and access nutritious food options. Additionally, by supporting policies that incentivize grocery stores and markets to open in underserved areas can also contribute to addressing food deserts.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“I am not in favor of the 2040 plan, or any central planning or top-down approach, and I am also against the restrictive requirements inherent to the creation of "10-minute" neighborhoods. What I do support, as I have indicated in other answers, is providing each community with the foundation on which it can build the infrastructure it needs to flourish in its own unique way. I do not believe it is the city’s, or any government’s, job to dictate where and how food choices are available. Instead, per my previous answers, I want the city to provide the necessary space and tools to create and maintain community gardens in neighborhoods where people are engaged and supportive. Successfully implementing community gardens involves education, restoring the knowledge that was passed down generationally for most of human history. In providing the resources for educating people on managing and maintaining a community garden, there is ample opportunity to also provide education on exercise, healthy eating habits, the importance of sleep, ways to destress, and a wide range of other wellness knowledge to which people often don't have easy access. Instead of finding a video on Tik Tok to inform dietary and lifestyle choices, qualified experts can teach communities, who then have that knowledge as a resource forever. Further, connections to the food we are eating elevates its importance psychologically. Armed with knowledge around
healthy living, this connection creates a new opportunity for farmer’s markets to thrive, as people will understand what they are buying and why it is important. I am in favor of eliminating sales tax for any local goods sold at farmer’s markets that establish themselves in food desert neighborhoods, and I would seek additional incentives for them to operate during hours - especially evenings and weekends - that are generally more accessible for working people.”

AT-LARGE RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):
“Better public transit infrastructure is needed to achieve greater access to public gardens and solving the issue of food deserts. For people without cars, bike paths, sidewalks, and buses that run every 15-minutes (minimum) improve access to the many amenities our city has to offer. To that end, better public transit makes it easier for folks to move around the city and prosper. After all, it is hard to climb the economic ladder if you don’t have a reliable way to get to work. Prosperity for the working class begets more prosperity and opening doors is the best way to promote our goal of a better city.”

LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):
“There are numerous communities around the city that do not have access to public gardens, I support more funding for Neighborhood Associations to learn what healthy food options they will support and want.”

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):
“I’ve championed co-op models in food deserts, and helped secure $1.5MM for the Three Sisters Market along West Blvd.”

DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“Continue to support organizations like Carolina Farm Trust that just broke ground for a community garden in the Hoskins Community in District 2 where residents can purchase local farm produce in there community and continue to promote urban agriculture programs. In addition, I would encourage the formation of food cooperatives, where residents collectively own and operate a store or market. I'm currently working with a non profit to bring this concept to Beatties Ford Road in city council district 2.”

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Tiawana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“Within District 3 there already are a number of community leaders holding the work of community gardening and education - as a city council member it will be my work to help support their existing programs. Too often these communities and their efforts feel overlooked, so it'll be my goal to connect them with the resources and opportunities (grants, etc.) they need to expand these homegrown programs and create inroads to more participation. Additionally, I'd look for ways to attract more grocery stores in the areas that have limited options.”

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.

DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Wil Russell (D, District 4):
“To ensure our residents have access to public gardens and healthy food, I would like to ensure that the UDO will accommodate the creation of public gardens across the city. We should also look for ways to encourage urban farming within the city, by providing resources to organizations and residents that want to create urban farms.”

**Olivia Scott (D, District 4):**
“I will work with Community Leaders, local food industry owners, environmental leaders and even regional farms to ensure that every resource possible is utilized for this cause.”

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**DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY**

**Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):**
“I believe as the 2040 Vision Plan has some incredible goals, I believe too that their is still much can be added to ensure these Goals are accomplished by carefully watching all the developments coming on board in our City. The UDO Policies must be adhered to without exceptions being introduced that contradicts an Area Plan and/or Zoning Classification. As a City Council, ensuring that every issue, development and housing (within our Council's legal abilities)must be reviewed by each of Us and then hold our City Staff accountable to adhere to the UDO Policies, the 2040 Vision Plan Goals without allowing exception after exception outside what has been approved. If exceptions are being made, Council needs to take up making amendments to UDO and 2040 Plan that keeps the 10 minute Neighborhoods true to outcomes to positively benefit the Residents/Neighborhoods that they have equitable opportunities in "their backyards" for healthy access to grocers, community gardens wherever parcels are available. District 5 definitely has must start seeing the results of no longer having food deserts. District 5 severely lacks accessibility to quality grocery stores or vast community gardens in order to bring home fresh vegetables or quality food to have a healthy lifestyle. Having to take unreliable public transportation to another area of Charlotte for basic life necessities must change and not be put off into the distant future. East Charlotte deserves quality options for food, sage and quality housing, safe and reliable forms of transportation, alternative transportation by biking, walking with safe sidewalks, safe connective trails all leading to quality, close in proximity to their housing to enjoy the "Live, Work and Play" and healthy food accessibility mission for every Charlotte Resident within 10 minutes of their homes.”

**Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):**
Molina has not responded.
Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.

DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“In the Greatest Country in the world, access to fresh and healthy food should be a priority and available for every zip code, not just some. Clanton Park-West Blvd, etc., should have access to brand grocery stores. I will engage with the residents of District 6 and beyond to share about grants, incentives for community gardens, and vertical gardening systems, similar to what Innovation Barn is doing until all zip codes have access. Incentives major grocery chains and minority-owned local grocery stores set up shops in identified Food Desert locations and ensure access to stable public transportation to and from these neighborhoods. Finally, I will engage with Public-Private-Faith partnerships to advocate and develop initiatives with the community to solve this pressing issue in zip codes with limited or no access to healthy food, fresh foods, and food gardens in their neighborhoods.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - FOOD SECURITY

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.
QUESTION #8 (Tree Canopy)
Charlotte has a goal of building the city’s tree canopy coverage to 50% by 2050, but some now view this as aspirational and unattainable. The tree canopy coverage has actually been declining. As of 2019, the canopy cover is approximately 45%, down from 49% in 2012.

What will you do to help preserve and enhance our tree canopy?

MAYOR RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Lucille Puckett (D, Mayor):
“To help preserve and enhance the tree canopy in Charlotte, several steps could be taken:

1. Urban Planning: Incorporate tree planting and preservation into urban development plans to ensure that new constructions consider the importance of maintaining tree cover.

2. Tree Planting Programs: Implement aggressive tree planting initiatives that encourage residents, businesses, and local authorities to plant more trees in their neighborhoods.

3. Tree Maintenance: Prioritize proper care and maintenance of existing trees to ensure their longevity and health.

4. Tree Ordinances: Enforce and strengthen tree protection ordinances that regulate tree removal and encourage planting of replacements.

5. Community Engagement: Raise awareness and engage the community in tree planting and care through workshops, events, and educational campaigns.

6. Incentives: Offer incentives such as tax breaks or grants for property owners who plant and maintain trees on their land.

7. Green Infrastructure: Incorporate trees into urban infrastructure planning, like using trees for natural stormwater management and cooling effects.

8. Collaboration: Collaborate with local organizations, nonprofits, and universities to develop strategies for tree canopy preservation.
9. Data Collection: Continuously monitor and assess the tree canopy coverage to track progress and adjust strategies as needed.

10. Partnerships: Partner with private businesses and organizations to fund tree planting and canopy enhancement projects.

By combining these strategies and involving various stakeholders, Charlotte can work towards its goal of increasing the tree canopy coverage while promoting a greener and more sustainable city environment.”

Rob Yates (L, Mayor):
“How sad, but unfortunately typical of government, is it that we set a goal to do something as simple as planting trees, and we are going in the wrong direction. As I have described, I will develop outdoor spaces with additional canopy coverage, I will seek to plant trees around bus stops (where they won't block the sun from the solar panels, though!), and I will explore creating carbon offset credit viable areas in our city, where outside entities can finance green-reclamation projects and receive the credits for the carbon removed from the atmosphere through those areas.”

AT-LARGE RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Steven DiFiore (L, At-Large):
“The UDO has made it easier for developers to build higher density, which means there will be more space for our tree canopy. The mandate of detached single family homes and large lawns has been a threat to the tree canopy for decades as our urban forests are cut down to make room for cookie-cutter subdivisions. Continuing to liberalize zoning and allowing more variety in the home types available to our growing population will help our tree canopy rebound without constraining much needed housing supplies.”

LaWana Slack-Mayfield (D, At-Large)(i):
“I have spoken out repeatedly agains the "clear cutting" of mature trees and paying a fee in lieu. I support appointing more members from the community that are climate change agents to the Planning Commission and other committee’s that see and approve projects before they come before Council for a Vote.”

Victoria Watlington (D, At-Large):
“I support funding to preserve heritage trees for individuals and through organizations like TreesCharlotte, and have long pushed for environmental considerations in development through the rezoning process.”

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DISTRICT 1 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Dante Anderson (D, District 1)(i):
Anderson has not responded.

DISTRICT 2 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Malcolm Graham (D, District 2)(i):
“I would continue to support organizations that work to protect and enhance the tree canopy. I would lead council in advocating for strong tree preservation ordinances and regulation that require permits for removal of trees on public and private property. Support tree planting programs for the entire city.”

Gary Young (D, District 2):
Young has not responded.

DISTRICT 3 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Tiwana Brown (D, District 3):
Brown has not responded.

Melinda Lilly (D, District 3):
“Having a robust tree canopy is imperative to curbing our urban island heat effect and reducing cooling costs (emissions, monetary and energy-wise). We have a great asset in the Charlotte Tree Advisory Commission and I will be looking to them for expertise and guidance on how best preserve mature or heritage trees, which provide the most cover, while restoring trees that may have been displaced during different phases of development.”

Warren Turner (D, District 3):
Turner has not responded.

James Bowers (R, District 3):
Bowers was unreachable.
DISTRICT 4 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Renee Johnson (D, District 4)(i):
Johnson has not responded.

Wil Russell (D, District 4):
“One of the things policies that was included in the UDO was a revised tree save ordinance. Under our previous zoning ordinance, the tree save ordinance was a separate section of the overall zoning ordinance for the city. The UDO does provide a more stringent process for maintaining existing trees; however, more work is needed. I would like to see trade-offs in the UDO that would allow reductions in parking and impervious materials in exchange for keeping as many of the existing trees onsite as possible. Trees are a part of Charlotte’s identity, and we need to continue to protect our tree canopy.”

Olivia Scott (D, District 4):
“This is one of my largest passions! What the incumbent in City Council District 4 has allowed to happen to our vital tree canopies is despicable. If the canopy cover was 45% down in 2012, we can only imagine that it is over 80% gone now. We need to take action on this immediately by creating emergency ordinances to protect our local forests, wildlife habitats and tree canopy from further development; and heavily enforce it.”

DISTRICT 5 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Curtis Hayes Jr. (D, District 5):
“Wow! Having grown up in Charlotte, I have witnessed firsthand the destruction and massive loss of our Tree Canopy. It is so sad and devastating from a beauty standpoint but more importantly, from a health and environmental standpoint. I believe the UDO Ordinance has its merits but does not truly address or hold everyone accountable that should be. yes, some loss of the tree canopy has been lost from aging and from some homeowners. I believe those who have really created the devastation of our Tree Canopy has been from massive clear cutting by developments and the City itself. If we as a City and County are truly serious about saving, preserving and restoring our Tree Canopy; which by the way was our crown & jewel of Charlotte, clear cutting must be stopped and anyone who does this must be held monetarily responsible immediately, no excuses and no exceptions. The practice of some developers and the City on acreage with tree canopy has and continues to be where massive tree tearing takes place, funds can be contributed to a tree fund. Not enough money contributed for future tree
samplings can make up for the mature trees removed. If the UDO our City is serious in resolving the loss, preservation and replenishing of our tree canopy, the Rules and Ordinances Must be adhered to by Everyone, Developers, City Departments every single Day! If not adhered to then stiff penalties and no exceptions or excuses should be allowed. as a City Council Member, I will do everything I can to work towards holding the 50% tree canopy goal by 2050, not as an inspiration or "hey that would be nice, but we will see" approach. If not, the work in getting the UDO and 20410 Plan are no better than the decades old approaches and policies of the past."

Marjorie Molina (D, District 5)(i):
Molina has not responded.

Vinroy Reid (D, District 5):
Reid has not responded.

DISTRICT 6 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Tariq Bokhari (R, District 6)(i):
Bokhari has not responded.

Stephanie Hand (D, District 6):
“Charlotte's tree canopy is an essential part of Charlotte's identity, environmental health, and quality of life for all our residents. Our children's Public Montessori elementary school taught them that trees provide numerous benefits, from shade to improving air quality. To be a part of reversing this crisis decline - It is essential to examine how incentives are grants to developers who preserve healthy trees—Private communities hosting tree planting and education events for all. Partner with Mecklenburg County to create a lasting legacy of healthy trees; when I fly into Charlotte, look out my window seat, and see the tree canopy indigenous to Charlotte, I know I am almost home. Our green Canopy is one of the key reasons people worldwide want to call Charlotte Home. Let's work together and continue to grow while at the same time keeping our green Canopy vibrant.”

DISTRICT 7 RESPONSES - TREE CANOPY

Ed Driggs (R, District 7)(i):
Driggs has not responded.

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