

2025 CITY OF FREDERICK PRIMARY ELECTION VOTERS GUIDE



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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FREDERICK COUNTY

Introduction

Welcome to the 2025 primary election guide for the city of Frederick

Frederick is electing a mayor and seven City Council members this year. All serve four-year terms.

The primary election is on Sept. 9. The early-voting dates for the primary election are Aug. 22 and 23.

The winners of the primary will compete in the general election, which is on Nov. 4. The early-voting dates for the general election are Oct. 24 and 25.

There are only Democratic primaries. Republicans did not have multiple candidates for any seat, so there is no Republican primary.

Because Maryland holds closed primaries, only voters registered as Democrats may vote in the primary.

STRUCTURE

The Frederick City Council is expanding this year from five seats to seven seats because of a change in the charter approved in September 2024.

Previously, the five-member council was elected citywide. The new council will have five seats elected by districts and two at-large seats that represent the entire city, for a total of seven seats.

The map to the right shows the five districts in the city. Residents in each district will vote to elect a representative of their district. They do not vote in the elections for the other four district representatives.

Therefore, a resident may vote for one representative in their district and up to two at-large representatives.

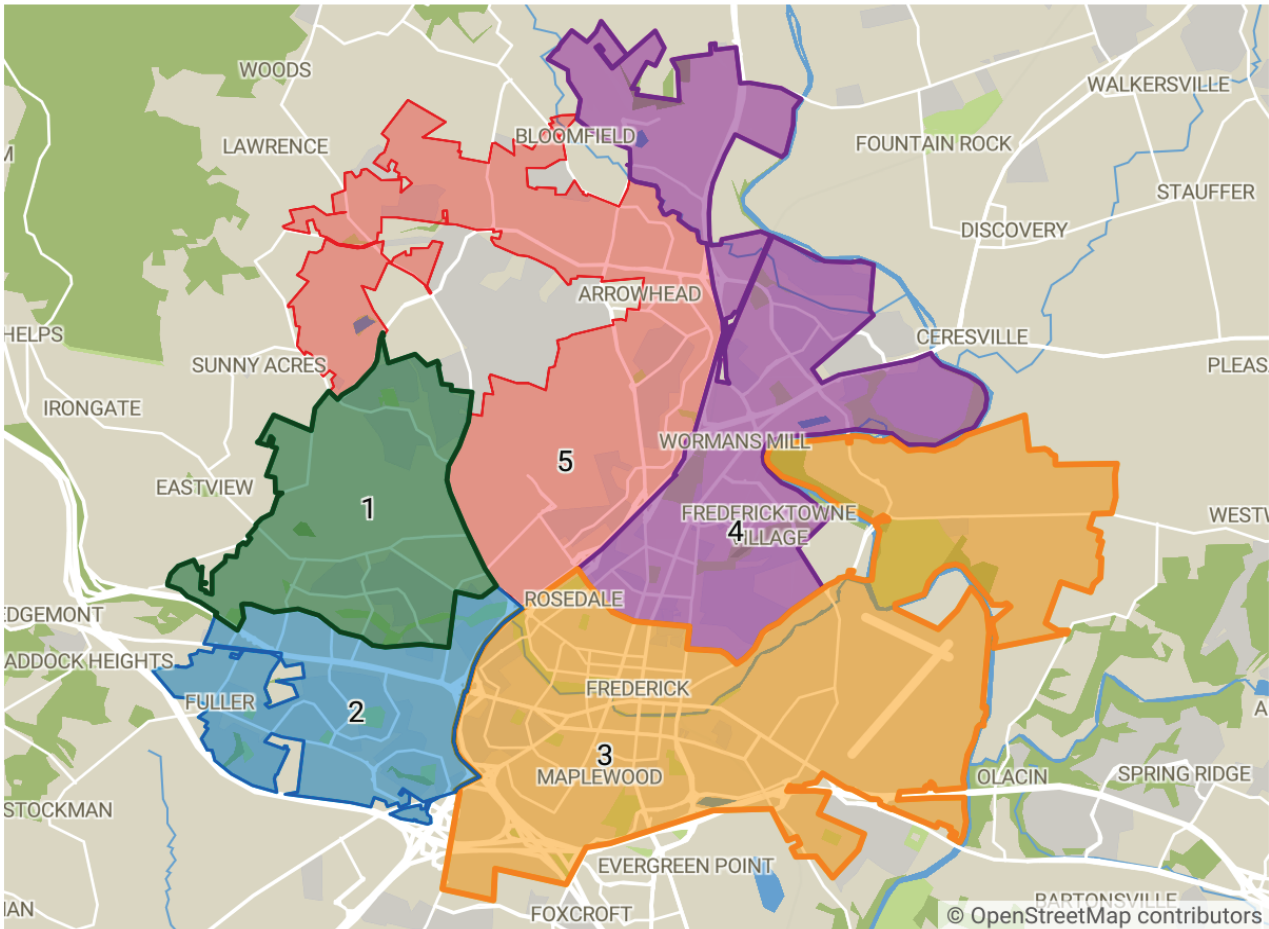
PARTNERS

The Frederick News-Post and the League of Women Voters of Frederick County, Maryland, collaborated to create this guide to help inform voters. Neither organization is supporting or opposing any candidate or political party in the election.

QUESTIONS

For questions about Frederick's election, email City Clerk Phyllis Hane at phane@cityoffrederickmd.gov or call her at 301-600-2575.

Frederick Mayoral and City Council Candidates



- District 1 - Katie Nash (D)**
- District 2 - César Díaz (D)**
- District 3 - Dave Schmidt (D) and Peter Brehm (D)**
- District 4 - Joe Adkins (R), Fredy Ventura Garcia (D) and S. Scott Lasher (D)**
- District 5 - Rob Callahan (R), Ryan Trout (D) and Sarah Hempel Irani (D)**
- At large - Jennifer Dougherty (D), Derek Shackelford (D), Kelly Russell (D), Donna Kuzemchak (D), and Libby Taylor (D)**
- Mayor - Michael O'Connor (D), Ron Beattie (D) and Tom Trott (R)**

Map by Cameron Adams

A map showing candidates who filed for Frederick City Council and mayor. The primary election is set for Sept. 9 and the general election on Nov. 4.

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

The 13 Democratic candidates in contested races in the primary were asked to provide information for the voter guide and answer questions about their views on specific topics:

- Mayor:** Michael O'Connor and Ron Beattie
 - City Council District 3:** Peter Brehm and Dave Schmidt
 - City Council District 4:** Fredy Ventura Garcia and Scott Lasher
 - City Council District 5:** Sarah Hempel Irani and Ryan Trout
 - City Council At Large:** Donna Kuzemchak (current council member), Kelly Russell (current council member), Derek Shackelford (current council member), Jennifer Dougherty and Libby Taylor (competing for two seats)
- All other candidates have no opponents in the primary and advance to the general election:
- Mayor:** Tom Trott (Republican)
 - City Council District 1:** Katie Nash (Democrat, current council member)
 - City Council District 2:** César Díaz (Democrat)
 - City Council District 4:** Joe Adkins (Republican)
 - City Council District 5:** Rob Callahan (Republican)

Voting options

POLLING PLACE

In-person voting for the city of Frederick election will take place at Trinity Recreation Center at 6040 New Design Road. The site will be used for both early voting on Aug. 22 and 23 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and for voting on the day of the primary on Sept. 9 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

MAIL-IN BALLOTS

Mail-in ballots will be sent to all registered voters. Voters may return mail-in ballots at any of the six drop box locations in the city:

- **The Bourne Building**, 355 Montevue Lane
- **Hillcrest Commons**, 1150 Orchard Terrace
- **Talley Recreation Center**, 121 N. Bentz St.
- **Housing Authority Office**, 209 Madison St.
- **Governor Thomas Johnson High School**, 1501 N. Market St.
- **Frederick Community College**, 7932 Opossumtown Pike

Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked on or before Sept. 9 and received by Sept. 12 at 4:30 p.m.

ELIGIBILITY

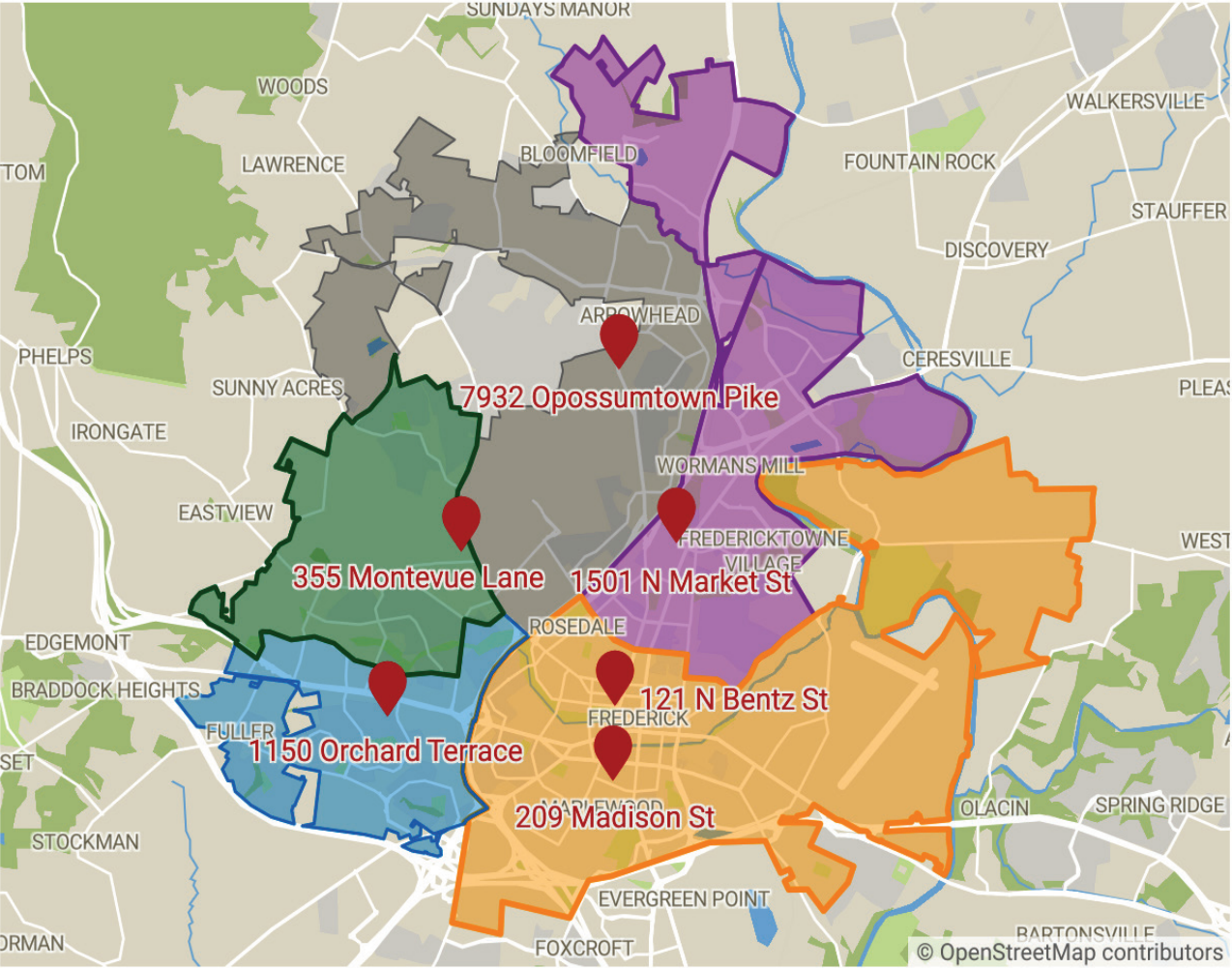
All Frederick residents are eligible to vote, regardless of citizenship status. Any city resident not registered to vote through Maryland's voter registration process must register with the city. Any city resident eligible to vote in county, state and federal elections needs to register with the state.

Links to the city and state registrations are posted at cityoffrederickmd.gov/1824/Am-I-Registered. The city-election voter registration form must be returned to the city clerk at City Hall, 101 N. Court St. Voters can go to cityoffrederickmd.gov/1750/Information-for-Voters for an interactive map to determine which district they live in.

DEADLINE TO REGISTER

The deadline to register for the primary election was Aug. 8 in person and Aug. 9 online.

City of Frederick ballot drop box locations



Map by Nolan Wilkinson

A map of the locations for drop boxes for ballots in upcoming city elections for mayor and seven City Council members. After receiving primary ballots in the mail from the city, voters can drop them off in boxes at the locations until Sept. 9.

MAYOR

POWERS AND DUTIES (from the charter): "The Mayor is the chief executive officer and the head of the administrative branch of the City government and shall see that the ordinances of the City are faithfully executed. The Mayor is responsible for the administration of the city's affairs to the City Council and to the voters of the City. The specific powers and duties of the mayor are set forth in this section and in other sections within this Charter."

TERM: Four years. Limit of two consecutive terms.
SALARY: \$112,640 as of December 2024. \$131,497 beginning December 2025.
TERM LIMITS: As of September 2024, no individual can serve more than two consecutive terms in the same elected office, but may be eligible to run again if a full term has passed since their last term.

CITY COUNCIL

GENERAL POWERS (from the charter): "The City Council may pass any ordinance not contrary to the Constitution and laws of Maryland or this Charter, as it may deem necessary for the good government of the City; for the protection and preservation of the City's property, rights, and privileges; for the preservation of peace and good order and for securing persons and property from violence, danger, or destruction; and for the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City."
The City Council adopts and/or modifies the city's annual operating and capital improvement budgets as proposed by the Mayor. The Council approves the appropriation and transfer of City funds, after the budget is adopted, through special ordinances. The Council provides advice and consent to appointments to City Boards and Commissions and key City staff as proposed by the Mayor.
TERM: Four years. Limit of three consecutive terms.
SALARY: \$31,289 as of December 2024. \$36,546 beginning December 2025.
TERM LIMITS: As of September 2024, no individual can serve more than three consecutive terms in the same elected office, but may be eligible to run again if a full term has passed since their last term.

✓ Mayor (choose one)

Michael O'Connor



“

People deserve to live in a city that delivers opportunity, protects shared values, and builds prosperity for every neighborhood. ... We will stand up to federal actions and advocate for all residents.

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

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 • **Facebook:** Michael O'Connor for Frederick
 • **Twitter:** @CitizenMOC
 • **Instagram:** OConnor forFrederick

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: Villa Estates

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Mayor since 2017: Business manager at Saint Katharine Drexel Roman Catholic Congregation, 2006–2017; senior producer at GS Communications/Adelphia/Comcast, 1998–2006.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Mayor, 2017–present; alderman, 2009–2017; unsuccessful bid for Maryland House of Delegates, 2002.

1 – Why are you running for mayor? (75 words max)

People deserve to live in a city that delivers opportunity, protects shared values, and builds prosperity for every neighborhood. I will continue the historic investments in resiliency, stormwater management, transportation mobility; economic opportunity including our youth center, Harry Grove Stadium, and downtown hotel; and community resources including a westside community center, AARCH's Black history museum, a new county library and park improvements. We will stand up to federal actions and advocate for all residents.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

For the last eight years, I've led through historic flooding (2018), the worst of the pandemic (2020–2022), and the racial reckoning following George Floyd's murder (2020), with respect, inclusivity, and competence, in collaboration with our county, state, and federal partners. Frederick is economically strong with a low crime rate, and quality of life as our focus. I have been a legislator in Frederick, so I understand the demands of the council and what valued partners the members are. I hold leadership positions in statewide (MML past president), regional (Metropolitan Washington COG secretary-treasurer), and national organizations (NLC Human Development Committee).

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Making sure Frederick remains vibrant and full-service, with a high quality of life that is affordable to everyone who wants to live here. We have made the investment

in a new police headquarters, adopted policies to look at long-term vacancies, licensed rental properties to ensure everyone has safe and decent housing. We're doing a needs assessment on the broader housing market to inform a deeper essential affordable housing conversation. Supporting workforce development is an emerging opportunity to guarantee our young people have both the means and opportunity to grow and thrive in Frederick.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

We have seen a net of about 400 new businesses over the last four years and the non-residential percent of our assessable tax base increase. We have phased out the business personal property tax to match Frederick County. Our commercial vacancy rate sits lower than county, state, and national averages. As a result of our policies, we've seen increasing dollars flow to small, minority-, and women-owned businesses and assisted numerous businesses through various microgrant initiatives.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

Having served on the Board of Aldermen, I understand the challenges the legislative body deals with, but they have been outstanding partners in the work of the city. While we have not agreed on everything, where we have disagreed, it has been about approach and not direction. Having a City Council and mayor who are ideologically aligned means our focus can be on how best to address the challenges our community faces, rather than debating whether or not the challenges exist.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

To address the very complex issue of affordable housing every tool in the city's control should be explored and discussed, including this one. If we have only seen home builders elect to pay the fee rather than build the units, is the fee too low? What qualifies as moderately priced can also be a moving target based on factors outside the city's control, such as interest rates. We are completing a housing needs assessment in partnership with the county. I am looking forward to the results of that study informing the important policy discussions required to address housing affordability.

7 – How do you assess the city's

transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Our goal is further investment in multi-modal opportunities to ensure cars are only one of the options our residents have. The fare-free county transit system is continuing to evolve including new bus shelters. Our design of a dedicated bus lane with an enhanced shared-use path along U.S. 40 (Golden Mile) is progressing. We advocated with our state delegation to ensure the U.S. 15 safety and lane improvements stayed in the budget. We are developing a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan (Let's Move Frederick). Our traffic engineers and police will continue to respond to speeding and safety concerns focused on solutions.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

The vote to adopt all resident voting followed nearly two years of public discussion and comment before the Charter Review Committee, which I appointed, and the then-Board of Aldermen. I support the public process and respect the varied opinions on the matter. I believe that what will likely be a pretty modest change in the makeup of our city electorate will enhance broad community engagement and public discourse. It also aligns to my value of making Frederick a welcoming city to all.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

My concern with the tax-rate cut was that it was made before there was any discussion of what programs or services might be impacted. When the list did come as part of the council's vote on the budget, it included reductions in police services that support automated enforcement and our body-worn camera program, funding for nonprofits facing critical impacts from federal budget cuts, and salary adjustments for some of longest serving and most valuable employees.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

With a budget the size of Frederick's, it is always possible to find expenditures not everyone will support. But we have enhanced funding to parks in underserved areas, supported stormwater resiliency projects, expanded our sustainability efforts with citywide composting. On balance, I have always believed budgeting is the method to fund our values based on the needs and wants of our residents, with the goal of maintaining a safe, vibrant, well-run city with a high quality of life.



Ron Beattie

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in:
Downtown / South Market Street

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Currently self-employed as independent consultant in alternative energy.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): I have never run for political office before.

1 – Why are you running for mayor? (75 words max)

Frederick is the second largest and fastest growing city in Maryland and yet we continue to operate with a small-town mentality. My 4+ years on the Planning Commission showed me that the planning process is flawed and city government operates inefficiently in silos where creativity is stifled and new ideas are discouraged. My extensive corporate and Chamber of Commerce experience will provide vision and leadership to guide Frederick into a future of realized potential.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

After spending four years in the USCG, I began a 40+ year career (the first 10 years obtaining a degree in Business Management at night) in corporate organizational management and eventually running my own corporate real estate technology company. I spent 20 years as president of my local Chamber of Commerce, 10 years as president of a major county-owned museum and planetarium, and co-chaired NY Rising to build resiliency after Superstorm Sandy — where I obtained \$3 million in extra funding for my community. These experiences have developed my ability to think strategically with vision and leadership.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Lack of planning for decades has brought Frederick to an inflection point in terms of the path to its future. This lack of planning is not just in real estate development projects — it's a problem in all facets of city government. It's the major cause of Frederick's increasing unaffordability. There's no coherent and unified strategic plan for any area of city of Frederick government. We react to things as a city. The result is that solutions to

problems are often more expensive and intractable than if we simply were proactive and strategic in our approach to begin with.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Mediocre. Yes, the vibrancy of downtown is always a highlight that draws visitors and generates tourism dollars, but there are increasing vacancies downtown. And the city of Frederick is more than just downtown. The Golden Mile has been virtually ignored and a blighted vacant mall isn't helping that situation. The mayor needs to be more proactive in planning and to engage more in conflict resolution between businesses and landlords. Frederick's done a good job attracting biotech and pharma firms, but with the recent cuts by the federal government (e.g., Fort Detrick), we must be prepared for more.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

If I had one thing to criticize the current City Council on it's that they are struggling to find their footing and understanding that they have more power than they think. I have unbounded optimism for the newly empowered City Council. I intend to work with them for a Frederick Future Vision Plan that realigns the NACS to the new electoral districts, so that every citizen will have their concerns heard and acted on. I will make sure that the City Council has access to city staff and ensure that they have every resource to serve their constituents needs.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

Fees-in-lieu have proven to be a bad idea for housing, schools and forest conservation. De-incentivizing never works — and that's what fees-in-lieu do. With regard to moderately priced housing, I will take developers' proposals to build 100% affordable housing and move them to the front of the line. Reduced development costs equals reduced rental or sale prices and it doesn't cost the city anything. We can then strategize for other attainable housing solutions in conjunction with HHS, Planning and Economic Development. I will also coordinate with county and state officials to maximize our resources.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any,

would you make? (100 words max)

Our road infrastructure is not keeping up with growth. Frederick Health's expansion plan is an example — where seven intersections failed the traffic study and the city stated that Monocacy Boulevard cannot be expanded. On the Planning Commission for the last three years, I recommended that smart traffic systems be studied to improve traffic flow with minimal cost — and was ignored. We must stop pointing fingers at the county about public transportation and partner with them for a better solution. Bike trail plans are great. More thought needs to go into safer design with motorized vehicles on the rise.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

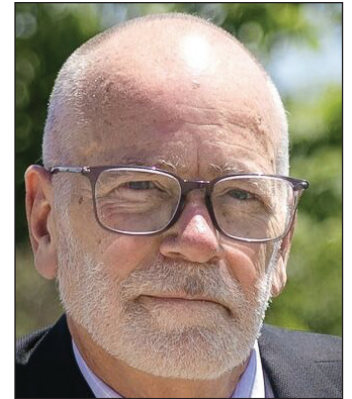
People who reside in this city, work hard and pay their taxes deserve for their voices to be heard. Along with that vote, I personally think that we should pay more attention to their needs, especially on the west side of town. There's more community building and equity that truly needs to be done and I have plans for that — e.g., increased pedestrian safety, including better transportation and a pedestrian bridge over U.S. 40 tied to a repurposed decrepit mall.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

That is clearly a dilemma question. On one hand it's a tax cut, but on the other, it's a meaningless one to the ones who truly need it. We have to ask the question instead: Why do we have a constant reserve budget surplus of \$28 million that grows every year and argue over a tax cut that will minimally reduce your real estate taxes but not help anyone who rents or is homeless? Why can't we better allocate our resources?

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

No. This city throws money at problems and has no way of tracking any benefits from their investment. This city has spent millions of dollars on studies that give the illusion of getting things done, but in reality, sit on a shelf and are ignored — e.g., the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. This city gave an excuse that it didn't lose \$280,000 due to an online theft related to the new police HQ — it was only \$50,000 of taxpayer money. More troubling was that a full audit and accounting of this event was not done, leaving citizens wondering.



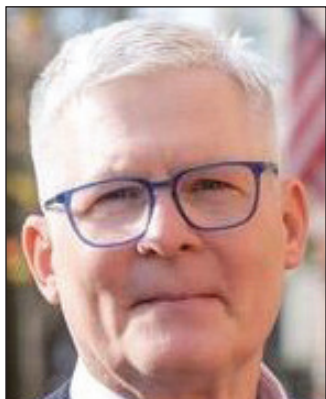
“Lack of planning for decades has brought Frederick to an inflection point in terms of the path to its future. This lack of planning is not just in real estate development projects — it's a problem in all facets of city government.”

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

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- **Reddit:** Ron_Beattie Frederick
- **TikTok:** @RonForFutureFrederick

City Council District 3 (choose one)

Peter Brehm



Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood do you live in:
District 3, Baker Park

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Retired; formerly served as information specialist, managing purchasing and the budget for the Hood College Information Technology Department.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): I have not previously served in a public office or stood for election.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

The new City Charter creates a more representative government by establishing districts, increasing accountability between council members and district neighborhoods. It also strengthens the council's oversight role, allowing for public hearings to review city spending, progress, and performance. This includes monitoring the West Side Regional Park, use of in-lieu housing fees, DHHS programs, sidewalk repairs, and the status of blighted and vacant properties to ensure city efforts align with community needs and deliver measurable results.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

I've supported Frederick's nonprofits and served in local government. I'm ready to bring that experience to City Hall. My leadership roles, advocacy for neighbors, and efforts to make Frederick the place we love has included serving as a NAC coordinator, secretary for the Frederick County Continuum of Care Collaborative, treasurer for The Frederick Center, treasurer for the Student Homelessness Initiative Partnership (SHIP), treasurer for the Kiwanis Club of Frederick, president of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ (ERUCC), treasurer for PFLAG Frederick, and serving on County Executive Jessica Fitzwater's Transition Task Force. I am prepared and ready to serve.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

The most important issue in this race is accountability — listening and responding to residents in a timely, transparent way. I will hold regular meetings, respond to concerns quickly, and ensure decisions

reflect community input. I also prioritize intentional development by updating the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and finalizing Form-Based Code guidelines. On affordable housing, I support creating a task force to act on the City/County Housing Analysis. Finally, I will champion sustainable policies that promote energy efficiency, climate resilience, and expanded solar use.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

I believe the current business climate is good, but there's always room for improvement. The City Council should work closely with the Department of Economic Development, East Frederick Rising, the Downtown Frederick Partnership, the Golden Mile Alliance, and NACs to better understand the specific challenges facing businesses in each area — and take targeted, neighborhood-level action to address those needs. Small area plans are key to this.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

The City Council has allowed new development without ensuring proper planning for infrastructure, traffic, and parking. I would push for stronger oversight of Planning and Engineering staff and be willing to reject projects that don't align with community goals. Tools like the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code need updating, and Form-Based Code guidelines must be finalized. Improved transit and transportation planning are essential to support walkability, livability, and accessibility. Development should enhance — not overwhelm — our city's infrastructure and reflect a clear, community-driven vision.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

I support keeping the 12.5% moderately priced housing requirement and oppose allowing developers to pay a low in-lieu fee instead. If a buyout is permitted, the fee must reflect the actual cost of building a unit. Current fees are too low to make a real impact, delaying progress on affordable housing. To meet growing demand, we need developers to build these units — not opt out.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Frederick needs a comprehensive traffic and parking plan that considers the nearly 1,000 new housing units within a couple of miles of the Square Corner, plus major projects like the Conference Hotel, Brickworks, and Galleria. As development grows on all sides of the city, we must acknowledge our car-dependent reality while investing in public transit that is reliable, frequent, and operates later into the evening and on weekends. I also support exploring shuttle services from remote parking lots to reduce congestion downtown and improve access for residents and visitors.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I support allowing all residents to vote in local elections, regardless of immigration status. These are our neighbors — they live, work, pay taxes, and send their children to school here. Many are working toward citizenship, but face a long, expensive, and often restrictive process. Giving them a voice in decisions that affect their daily lives strengthens our democracy and builds a more inclusive community. I recognize some residents may have concerns, and I support holding public hearings to review the City Charter Commission's findings and ensure open, respectful dialogue on this important issue.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I don't agree with that choice. I would have kept the tax rate the same and sought ways to utilize the funds to assist people — especially those who need it most — by reducing their taxes or other city-driven expenses.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

Spending on rental assistance, electric vehicles, and addressing blighted properties is wise. The failure to spend funds raised from MPDUs, rental licensing, tree programs, and school impact fees is unwise, coupled with the lack of clear monitoring and strategic direction. The programs and spending of the Department of Housing and Human Services must be analyzed. Similarly, a large portion of MPDU funds remains unspent, despite the growing need for housing. If spending is not aligned with measurable goals, investments risk being reactive, fragmented, and ineffective in addressing the city's long-term priorities and community challenges, ultimately diminishing their overall impact.

“
The most important issue in this race is accountability — listening and responding to residents in a timely, transparent way. I will ... respond to concerns quickly, and ensure decisions reflect community input.”

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

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- **Blue Sky:** peterbrehm

City Council District 3

Dave Schmidt

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in:
Downtown

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Co-owner of Wag's Restaurant; operations group leader at Frederick Air Inc.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): 2013, Ran for Frederick Board of Alderman

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

I will be living here for another 50 years. It saddens me deeply that working families are being priced out. I am running because the alternative is the continuation of small incremental progress. The world is changing and we need to leverage technology and our resources to prepare for a radically different future. We don't need politicians looking for the next position. We need strong leaders with real-world experience to stand up for our values.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

I served as a non-commissioned officer in the Marine Corps. I have owned and effectively operated businesses in the city. I have made decisions that mattered, with real-world consequences. I have spent my career building successful teams and earning their buy-in to accomplish difficult things together. I have a lifetime of solving extraordinary problems and navigating through them to reach shared goals. Ask anyone who has ever worked with me: I know how to get things done. That's the experience we need to build a future that works for everyone in the city, not just those blessed with abundant resources.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Affordability. Not just housing and rent, but childcare, groceries, utilities and everything else that the working families in Frederick struggle with daily. At hundreds of doors I have had the same conversation: Lifelong residents unsure how they will afford to stay in their homes, or 30-somethings with 3 or 4 roommates just to cover the rent. Incremental change is not enough. We need to treat homes as places to live, not assets to profit from. We need to hold builders accountable for promised mixed-use developments. We need stronger tenant protections and to rewrite the APFO to benefit residents, not corporations.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

The city staff works hard to help businesses navigate the bureaucratic layers. City Economic Development leverages everything we have to support and launch new businesses. However, downtown, the lack of adequate transit and non-vehicle transportation options create constant headaches with parking and traffic. We need to rethink how people move around in our city. Also, we need to stop letting businesses from D.C. rent the Creek for pennies and make a profit off of vendors that compete directly with our retailers and small shops. They are using our infrastructure and taking the money they earned back with them to D.C.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

Election charter changes were poorly communicated and implemented. From small mistakes, making overcoming a mayoral veto impossible, to large mistakes regarding district lines, the council waited too long, did not put in the necessary effort, and rushed the process, leaving residents feeling frustrated and ignored. Leadership is tough work and requires the courage to have difficult discussions. We need to redraw our district lines. We need to have an actual conversation with residents to understand how to increase participation and representation. And we need to do this years before the next election, instead of making a rushed midnight decision.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

I support eliminating this fee-in-lieu. Housing is a human right. Developers shouldn't be allowed to buy their way out of building the housing that we desperately need. I will support working to find more ways to increase the number of affordable housing units we have in the city. We have enough luxury townhomes. We need more MPUs, in-fill, accessory dwelling units, and mixed-use development, as well as single-room occupancy units. We also need to address the explosion of short-term rentals owned by non-city residents. They are using our expensive infrastructure to make a profit. They need to pay for it.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

For decades our sole focus has been on personal vehicle transportation, leading to parking challenges and economic barriers

that hinder access to employment. We must bridge the gaps created by our city's layout, and help residents navigate internally without relying on car ownership or costly ride-sharing options. I will tirelessly advocate for transit funding and work with our county, state, and federal partners to secure more and greater access. A Downtown Circulator is an excellent first step. Then we need to look at our regional transportation connections and advocate for funding to connect us to consistent and robust metro/bus service.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I deployed to Iraq alongside Marines still on their immigration journey. Others had spouses at home who were working toward citizenship. Each of them sacrificed deeply for us. Our immigration system is broken and can take decades to navigate. Our federal government has failed us. Until they get their act together, those that pay taxes, our neighbors, our family and friends should have an equal say in how we run our city. Voting for the president or Congress is a function of your citizenship. But we are not citizens of the city. Here, in Frederick, I believe every voice matters.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

The tax rate cut passed by the City Council was performative at best. The proposal produced an average \$20-\$30 reduction, in most cases from an escrow account attached to our mortgages, not even in our pockets. I believe in real structural changes and a meaningful lowering of tax rates on working families and middle-income homeowners. The council did not try for substantive change. They wanted an election year news item. We should develop a progressive tax structure in the city with significant lowering of tax rates for the majority of properties and increase them for properties above a million dollars.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

We have made some historic blunders in the city. Hargett Farm is the most salient example. We have also had close calls: an absurd proposal to build a city-owned water park. The common threads are always ego, self-interest and lack of understanding what really matters to the residents of our city. When our leadership lives in a bubble, in neighborhoods where all the amenities are fully formed and sidewalks are perfect, their priorities wander far away from the lived reality of the rest of the city. What should we spend our money on? Maybe we should actually ask the people.



Housing is a human right. Developers shouldn't be allowed to buy their way out of building the housing that we desperately need. ... We also need to address the explosion of short-term rentals owned by non-city residents.

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City Council District 4 (choose one)

Fredy Ventura Garcia



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I am in favor of eliminating developer fees. Often, these fees are simply passed on to future tenants in the form of higher rents or charges. ... We're also potentially worsening the problem by increasing costs for future residents.

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Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: East Church

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Recently took a break from classes at FCC, previously worked at Kate Spade outlet and was a manager at a local Maryland farm for 11 years.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Brand new to politics.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)
I believe in strong representation, and I want to join the council to help ensure the body reflects our diverse community. I also aim to be a voice for those who often feel unheard.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)
My most recent relatable experience includes serving on our condo board for nearly 10 years, as well as managing individuals of various backgrounds, ethnicities, and ages at a local farm. Both roles equipped me with the skill to effectively juggle different needs at once.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)
It's tough to say one issue is the most important, because different people in a community have different concerns. But affordable housing is a topic that keeps coming up. I think two ways the council could help this are by working together to eliminate the fee developers can pay instead of providing their required percentage of affordable housing, and by implementing a form of rent stabilization.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)
Our city's business climate feels robust and diverse. As we grow, new and unique businesses are clearly being attracted here. However, there's always room for improvement, especially with the cost of living. As the second largest and rapidly growing city in Maryland, I believe we should explore adopting our own minimum wage to better support the needs of our residents.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)
A major issue the current City Council has failed to adequately address is the lack of affordable housing, particularly for young residents. The practice of allowing developers to pay a fee in lieu of providing affordable housing has exacerbated this problem. If I were on the council, I would fight to eliminate this practice.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)
I am in favor of eliminating developer fees. Often, these fees are simply passed on to future tenants in the form of higher rents or charges. This means we're not only failing to provide affordable housing, but we're also potentially worsening the problem by increasing costs for future residents.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)
As a rapidly growing city, Frederick faces significant challenges in its transportation network and road system. The city appears to be aware of these issues and is actively working toward solutions. However, a crucial area

where there could be less of a hurdle, and one I would strongly advocate for, is the expansion and modernization of sidewalks to enhance pedestrian friendliness. Furthermore, finding innovative ways to add safe and accessible bike lanes is essential to provide residents with transportation alternatives to personal vehicles.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)
I believe this is an excellent way to make our diverse immigrant population feel seen and included. This gesture by the city demonstrates to our immigrant residents that their opinions and engagement are valued, which aligns perfectly with the new council system and redistricting efforts designed to better serve our growing and diverse community. Such actions, I think, will foster a stronger bond and sense of community between the city and its immigrant population.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)
I agree with the City Council's decision to cut the tax rate. At a time when many are struggling to get by, particularly with housing costs, any action that helps our residents save money is a welcome relief.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)
This is a very individually opinion-based question, but I believe the city of Frederick's recent fiscal decisions demonstrate a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. The fact that the city had the ability to not just avoid increasing taxes, but actually cut them for a fiscal year, is a clear indicator of this. Furthermore, projects like the new police station and its innovative use of solar panels for parking are excellent examples of how Frederick is actively pushing forward in terms of technology and renewable energy.

City Council District 4

Scott Lasher

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in:
Market Square — City Council District 4

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Self-employed. Owner, Orangetheory Fitness Frederick on Wormans Mill Road

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): None

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words) I sincerely believe in my special ability to listen, assimilate, decide and advocate for the benefit of the city of Frederick. I am confident that I can help Frederick more effectively articulate and realize its vision.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

As a trial attorney since I graduated from law school in 1986, I have used and refined my abilities for the very successful representation of hundreds of clients across a broad range of industries and personal issues. I view the residents of the city of Frederick as my clients who deserve the same exceptional care that I have given every client during my professional life. My ownership of my own law firm in Colorado and a small business in Frederick and my roles on numerous boards of directors additionally prepared me for a leadership role on the City Council.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

In April 2021, the city adopted the 2020 City of Frederick Comprehensive Plan. The 308-page document presented a shared vision — a vision for the city through 2030. The plan considered 11 distinct subject areas within which are found the issues on which candidates are focused: Housing, land use, transportation, environment, economic development, fiscal, parks and recreation The issue of this race is giving renewed value to the plan — as evaluated and as modified. The issue is the assessment of every decision the council is asked to consider in the context of a singular vision.

4 – How do you rate the city's

business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

The most frequent comment regarding the business climate is the lack of businesses to appeal to young people. In a recent meeting of Strong Towns Frederick, for example, the topic was the conversion of an unoccupied building downtown to a multi-use property for young artists, live entertainment and affordable housing. The singular focus was appealing to young people with the fear that Frederick is aging itself to a precarious place. There needs to be a greater diversity of business types in downtown Frederick — again, with the effect of attracting young people either to come to Frederick or remain here.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

The City Council should always act in the best interests of the city and its residents. It cannot do that without a free, open exchange of information. It cannot do that without capitalizing on the incredible breadth of talent and energy (and passion) that the residents possess. Too many residents believe they do not have a voice as issues are considered and the council makes decisions. The council cannot operate in a vacuum. For example, too many people feel totally disconnected from the cricket stadium project and other major funding projects that will greatly affect the city and its future.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

Since FY14, the city has collected (including interest and miscellaneous revenue) \$9.25 million in MPDU fees. Prior to FY24, it had only disbursed \$383,406, or less than 7% of the amount collected to that date. In FY24, the city disbursed \$4.14 million. Currently, there is \$4.2 million available to disburse. A meaningful assessment of the in lieu fee program requires: (a) an impact study of the funds used; (b) a plan for the use of the unused funds; and © an understanding of the burden of the fees on the developers.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Without question, one of the most often mentioned issues is the inability

of the current transportation network and road system to accommodate the increase in population density over the past decade. What needs to happen is a return to the Transportation section of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to evaluate its observations/recommendations and what has occurred in the intervening five years. Undeniably, future growth must be premised upon the inclusion/existence of an adequate transportation system. We must be prepared to reject projects, such as the Frederick Health project on Monacacy Boulevard, because of an inadequate traffic flow plan.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

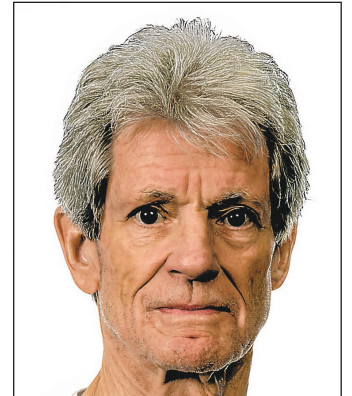
Yes. Certain decisions that the City Council make affect all residents of Frederick. It is patently unfair to relegate non-citizens to an inferior status by denying them the right to represent themselves in those decisions. Their general value to the city is largely uncontested and they deserve the recognition of that value with a vote.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

No. There are many rationales to support a tax cut. Budgetary consideration is one. However, I cannot accept Ben MacShane's comment: "I very much believe that we don't need to be taxing this much money, nor are we putting it to enough efficient, good use to continue to do so." That statement assumes that the city has more money in the budget than it needs to provide for the residents — whether in the context of land use, transportation, water, environment, housing and all of the other areas of interest outlined in the 2020 City of Frederick Comprehensive Plan.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

Unwise spending is not only what you spend and how, but the failure to spend money for its intended purpose. Since the issue of affordable housing — in its many iterations — is in regular focus, the failure to spend the MPDU fees is unwise. See question 6, above. There is also a reported budget surplus of more than \$30 million. Again, while a budget surplus can support a tax cut, it can also represent the failure of the city to spend money as it was budgeted (certain capital improvements, as an example).



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The City Council should always act in the best interests of the city and its residents. It cannot do that without a free, open exchange of information. ... Too many residents believe they do not have a voice as issues are considered and the council makes decisions.”

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City Council District 5 (choose one)

Sarah Hempel Irani



Political party: Democratic

Which neighborhood you live in: Villa Estates

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer:

For the past 25 years, I've operated a woman-owned business, Hempel Studios. I collaborate with communities to design and create custom statuary — from concept to installation — including the bronze sculpture of Claire McCardell on Carroll Creek in downtown Frederick. I also teach sculpture at Frederick Community College.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions):

This is my first campaign for public office. I have not previously held elected office and have not run in prior elections.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

As a small business owner and the sculptor of the Claire McCardell statue, I've seen the power of women working together to shape public space — starting with a vision and creating something that belongs to us all. I want to bring that spirit of collaboration to the City Council to serve the people of this city, where I've built my life, my business, my family, and my home.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

My work in public art has prepared me for public service. For 25 years, I've owned and operated Hempel Studios, a small woman-owned sculpture business in Frederick. I create custom artwork that brings community stories to life. The work begins with listening and building relationships. Together, we imagine what is possible, then I develop a design and a project plan. Each project involves navigating budgets, timelines, and approvals, while coordinating with fabricators, contractors, and community partners. I've built my career on creative problem-solving and collaboration.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Residents are deeply concerned about traffic, speeding, and pedestrian safety — issues that stem from development outpacing infrastructure. We must be more proactive and plan for infrastructure rather than reacting after the fact. I would propose a resolution allowing tactical urbanism so the city can partner with residents to implement small-scale traffic calming. Long-term, I'd support a task force to

modernize the Land Management Code and take a forward-thinking approach to investing in multimodal transportation — walking, biking, and transit — grounded in collaboration, neighborhood specificity, and the real experiences of Frederick residents.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Frederick has a supportive business climate, especially for creative and community-rooted enterprises. I've benefited from tax breaks through the Arts & Entertainment District and business coaching from the Women's Business Center. Still, high commercial rents and limited space — especially downtown — make it hard for small businesses to grow. Too many storefronts sit vacant for too long. Meanwhile, many employees can't afford to live nearby or access late-night transit. We need stronger action on vacant properties and policies that connect business, housing, and transportation as part of one shared ecosystem.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

The city has been slow to address long-vacant and blighted properties, particularly downtown. As a small business owner in Frederick, I see how these empty spaces affect foot traffic, perception, and opportunity. While ordinances exist, enforcement has lagged. I understand the complexity — property rights matter, and at the same time, in a city, one neglected building impacts the whole block. I'd work collaboratively with property owners, staff, and community members to enforce codes, clarify expectations, and create real incentives to bring these spaces back to life — for the sake of our shared economic and civic health.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

I support modifying the policy to ensure that building moderately priced housing is the easier, more cost-effective choice — not paying the fee. The Land Management Code should be updated to support smaller, more affordable home types, like cottages, duplexes, townhomes, and ADUs. We shouldn't eliminate the fee entirely, but we must stop letting developers shape the city by default. Frederick's future should reflect our values, not just market incentives.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Like most American cities, Frederick's

transportation system is still too car-centric for a sustainable future. We must have imagination — just because this is how things are doesn't mean this is how they must remain. Transportation is both a justice and climate issue. The people left out of car-centric infrastructure are often ALICE families, communities of color, and people with disabilities. These are the same groups most affected by climate change. A more inclusive city means safer streets, better sidewalks, public transit options, and long-term investments that serve everyone — not just those who can afford to drive.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

Yes. All residents of Frederick should have a say in local governance, regardless of immigration status. Many of our residents may not have citizen status, but live, work, pay taxes, and send their children to school here. Local issues directly affect their lives, and they deserve a voice in shaping our community. In many cases, they are caught in a broken federal immigration system — but that shouldn't exclude them from participating at the local level. Respecting our neighbors means ensuring everyone has representation in the decisions that impact their daily lives.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

Taxes are a top concern I hear from neighbors. I support the recent tax rate cut, but it doesn't go far enough — especially with property assessments at record highs. Many families, particularly retirees, are seeing higher bills despite the cut. At the same time, residents want solutions for overcrowded schools, traffic, and crumbling infrastructure. We must strike a better balance between affordability and preserving the quality of life that makes Frederick so desirable. I'd like to see Frederick run its budget through the Strong Towns Finance Decoder to better assess long-term solvency and guide smarter, more sustainable fiscal choices.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

While the city has made important investments, I believe some funds haven't been effectively managed or followed through. For example, money collected from rental licensing fees lacks a clear mechanism for being accessed or used to support housing and code enforcement. The West Side Regional Park is another case — funding has been allocated, but progress has stalled. Residents want to see action, not just a line item. Wise spending isn't just about allocation; it's about transparency, implementation, and ensuring city investments are benefiting the people they're meant to serve.

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Residents are deeply concerned about traffic, speeding, and pedestrian safety — issues that stem from development outpacing infrastructure. We must be more proactive and plan for infrastructure rather than reacting after the fact.

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City Council District 5

Ryan Trout

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: Villa Estates

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Director, Department of Housing and Community Development, city of Rockville; adjunct professor in Political Science Department, Mount St. Mary's University

Previous: Community Development Programs Manager, Frederick County Department of Housing and Community Development. Chief of staff, Maryland state Sen. Ron Young

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Ran for Maryland House of Delegates, 2010 and 2018

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

I'm running for City Council to help build a Frederick that is affordable, connected, and rooted in community. As a father, public servant, and longtime resident, I've seen how smart, compassionate local leadership can make a real difference — and how urgent the need is for outcomes that match our values. I'm ready to bring my experience and focus on results to City Hall and fight for a Frederick that works for everyone.

2 – What experience prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

I've spent more than 15 years in housing and community development, currently serving as Director of Housing and Community Development in a nearby city. I've managed programs that support affordable housing, youth mentorship, and emergency assistance, and during the pandemic, I led Frederick County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. I chaired the Affordable Housing Council, served as PTA treasurer at North Frederick Elementary and taught local government and housing courses at Mount St. Mary's. I understand how to turn policy into progress and I'm ready to use that experience to serve Frederick's families, businesses, and neighborhoods.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? (100 words max)

In District 5, the issues I hear about most at the door are street safety and school overcrowding — and both are deeply tied to how we grow. Villa Estates and other neighborhoods are cut off from downtown and parks by dangerous roads and poor pedestrian infrastructure. And new development is outpacing school capacity,

frustrating families. I'll fight for smarter planning that aligns housing, schools, and infrastructure and prioritizes traffic calming, better sidewalks, and safe routes to school. These changes improve daily life now, while laying the foundation for an affordable, connected, and family-friendly Frederick.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? (100 words max)

Frederick has done a great job supporting growing industries like biotech and craft beverages, which I enjoy, but we must do more to support neighborhood-scale businesses and entrepreneurs from underserved communities. I'll advocate for streamlined permitting, local hiring incentives, and technical assistance to help small and non-traditional businesses succeed. We should support community- and worker-owned business models that keep wealth local, and reinvest in our commercial corridors, so every part of the city has access to opportunity. Our business climate should work for everyone, not just those with capital or connections.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? (100 words max)

The city doesn't fund or build schools, but its development decisions have a direct impact on school enrollment, traffic, and student experience. Frederick's public schools are one of our greatest assets — and failing to plan growth in coordination with the school system risks overcrowding and lost educational quality. I would prioritize deeper collaboration with FCPS and the county earlier, aligning development approvals with school capacity and infrastructure planning. We must grow, and we must do so affordably, but if we don't grow responsibly, we risk undermining one of the most important reasons people choose to live here.

6 – Should the city keep, modify or eliminate the developer fee in lieu of building MPDUs? (100 words max)

All policies should be reexamined from time to time. The MPDU fee is tricky. Builders can either include some affordable homes in their projects or pay a fee that the city uses to help people who need housing the most. We need both: the money for deeply affordable housing, and more homes regular people can afford. It's a tough balance, but one I've worked on for over 15 years; finding smart, caring solutions, so everyone has a place to call home in Frederick. That's the kind of work I want to keep doing on the City Council.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? (100 words max)

Frederick's transportation network needs improvement — especially in District 5, where

many neighborhoods lack safe, well-marked routes into town. I support expanding sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and traffic calming, with inclusive wayfinding and human-centered design. We need better transit options and car-alternative routes that connect more people to commerce, culture, and community, without forcing them to drive. Smarter, safer, and more walkable streets reduce congestion, cut emissions, and make Frederick healthier and more equitable. It's time we design our city for people, not just for cars.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? (100 words max)

Our immigrant neighbors are an important part of Frederick. They work hard, raise families, contribute to our local economy, and strengthen our community in countless ways. I believe everyone who lives here deserves a voice in the local decisions that affect their daily lives. At the same time, we must recognize the challenges and risks in today's political climate. Any effort to expand civic participation must safeguard personal data, individual rights, and public safety. We have a duty to make sure that no one is put in harm's way for wanting to participate in their community.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? (100 words max)

The council, like me and many residents, wanted to see clear, measurable results that improve the lives of the people of Frederick. When they didn't, they chose to return funds to taxpayers. But moving forward, we need to adopt outcome-based budgeting that ties every dollar spent to real community impact. Tax decisions should reflect not only how much we collect, but how well we spend it. I'm running because I believe people deserve to see where their money goes and to feel the difference it makes in their everyday lives.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give examples. (100 words max)

The city has made important investments in infrastructure, parks, and public safety but there's more we can do to tie spending to outcomes that matter. I believe we should shift toward outcome-based budgeting, where every program is evaluated for its impact and efficiency. We also need to engage residents earlier in the budgeting process to align spending with real community needs. I would support participatory budgeting pilots, stronger reporting metrics, and data-driven evaluations that help ensure our money is doing what it's supposed to do: improving the lives of the people of Frederick.



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In District 5, the issues I hear about most at the door are street safety and school overcrowding — and both are deeply tied to how we grow. ... I'll fight for smarter planning that aligns housing, schools, and infrastructure.

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City Council At Large (choose up to 2)

Donna Kuzemchak



Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in:
College Estates

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer:

Grant writer/coordinator for Maryland Deaf Community Center. Realtor at Mackintosh Inc.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions):

Alderman, 1998-2009, Unsuccessful reelection campaign, 2009. Alderwoman, 2013-2024. City Council member, 2024-present.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

I am standing for another term because I still have a strong passion for serving my community and believe city residents deserve to have their tax dollars used wisely. Last fiscal year, over \$34 million of taxpayer money was budgeted, collected, and then not spent by the mayor. I firmly believe that residents should receive a tax break or refund when money is habitually not spent for the good of city residents.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

I was heavily involved in North Frederick, TJ Middle, and the county PTA before becoming an elected official. That experience taught me to genuinely listen to differences of opinion and work toward effective compromises. I served on the Planning Commission for seven years and have served as liaison to the Historic Preservation, Parks and Rec, Taxi and Education Commissions, as well as various others. I've studied, proposed amendments to, and voted on 24 city budgets. I became a Realtor in 2010 and started writing grants for nonprofits in 2011. Both jobs have transferable skills for elected officials.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

I hear people say affordable housing is the most important issue right now, but that's a broad issue with lots of moving parts and partial answers that somehow need to fit together. I believe, instead, the most important issue facing city residents is how to hold onto their hard-earned

money in the current economy. More money means more flexibility, and that includes what home they may be able to buy. That's why I voted for a tax break for city residents and want to use the rental licensing fund to help on down payments on affordable homes.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

As much as Frederick is a desirable place to live, we are also seeing it become a desirable place to bring businesses. Most of our businesses are small, and I think city residents like it that way. Smaller businesses tend to be more involved in the community and that in turn makes for a better community. One thing I would like to do is have the city support small businesses by providing matching funds for paid internships and on-the-job training for young adults and more experienced career changers.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

Neighborhood Advisory Council discussions. I believe in the NACs, and don't believe our discussions on NACs were well thought out. I didn't feel well at the time, so I'm sure my comments came across as not as supportive as I truly am. If I could go back, I'd handle the discussion better, as I want the NACs to thrive in their original role of more effectively communicating neighborhood concerns and keep the pulse of their neighborhoods. I'd love to align NACs with districts for better communication and accountability.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

I'm all for having discussions about fees as long as those discussions discuss the long-term benefits of fees vs forced building of Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs). I'd love moderately priced units to be integrated into every community, but selling those units isn't as easy as one might think. Meanwhile, if residents can't easily access the assistance provided by the fees collected, what's the point? If MPDUs are placed where city residents don't want to live, what's the point? Our solutions must be varied and long-term, as one solution does not fit all.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

I give local roads a B. If we aren't careful, we'll be at a D- in the near future. I'm thrilled the state is going to provide funding to help with U.S. 15 through the city. I remember before my husband passed away in 1995, I got upset when it took him 45 minutes to get home from Rockville. Now there are times it takes almost that long to get across town. I support rapid mass transit, and want to see more lines expand to Frederick, as well as expand bus service in the city.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

Nobody ever asked for my birth certificate or proof of immigration status when I've gone to vote. I'm certainly willing to have this discussion again, but if we are going to require proof of immigration status from one person, I believe we should require it from all. The real issue is getting all people more involved and getting them to vote in municipal elections.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I not only agree with the decision to cut the tax rate, I wish we'd done more. In the spirit of compromise, I lowered the tax cut from 5 cents per \$100 to 2.5 cents. The mayor then vetoed the budget that would've matched that lower tax rate, even as he left \$34 million on the books at the end of the last budget cycle. That money needs to go back to the people who paid it. I hope the newly elected City Council agrees to cut taxes again next year. I'd love to make that motion!

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

Westside Regional Park is a great value for its outdoor spaces, community center and as an economic tool for the west side of town. Carroll Creek is another example of smart investment as a park, economic driver, and flood control project that protects residents and businesses from floods and property damage. Recently, the city has spent millions on water/sewer/flood infrastructure to ensure people continue to have clean drinking water and are protected from flooding. Now, we should focus on smart growth and building city infrastructure to meet tomorrow's needs.

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The most important issue facing city residents is how to hold onto their hard-earned money in the current economy. More money means more flexibility, and that includes what home they may be able to buy.

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City Council At Large

Kelly Russell

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: College Park

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer:

Current council member. I served with the Frederick Police Department for 22 years as a police officer (lieutenant), and then three years part-time as the special vehicle coordinator.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Alderman for four terms, or 16 years. I am currently a council member.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

I am seeking reelection to continue providing Frederick with experienced and dependable leadership. My goal is to further advance our initiatives in public safety, sustainable development, economic growth, and accessible transportation. As a 42-year resident and retired police lieutenant, I offer valuable institutional knowledge and a dedication to serving our community. I am committed to thoughtful and inclusive governance that prioritizes residents' needs, protects neighborhoods, and positions our city for a resilient and equitable future.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

I served 22 years with the Frederick Police Department, rising to the rank of lieutenant and working in Patrol, Investigations, Traffic, and Human Resources. Since retiring, I continued to serve our city on the Neighborhood Advisory Council and Zoning Board of Appeals. As a city council member, I served on the Planning Commission and on Frederick's Sustainability and Active Mobility Advisory Committees. I represent Frederick in regional and state transportation planning, and while chair of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, helped advance U.S. 15 funding and created a grant program for Regional Roadway Safety.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Housing affordability is the most prominent issue in this race. As Frederick grows, we must ensure that people of all incomes can live and thrive here. I support strengthening the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program, using housing funds more strategically, and expanding creative housing options. I also advocate for preserving neighborhood character while promoting infill development near transit, schools, and services. By focusing on both new housing and support for existing residents —

through home repair, weatherization, and down payment assistance — we can create a more inclusive, stable housing environment that meets the needs of our diverse community.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Frederick's business climate is healthy and growing, with strong small businesses, a growing tech and bioscience sector, and an expanding creative economy. The city has supported this through infrastructure investment, business tax credits, and workforce partnerships. To improve it further, I would examine ways to streamline processes, support zoning that encourages mixed-use and neighborhood-serving businesses citywide and build upon programs for minority-owned and locally owned enterprises. Supporting entrepreneurship across all parts of the city — not just downtown — is essential to creating a more resilient and inclusive economy.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

One area that could be strengthened is the planning and communication around special-purpose funds like the fee-in-lieu for moderately priced housing. While these funds offer flexibility to support affordable housing projects, clearer public reporting and more defined strategies would improve transparency and effectiveness. I would support setting timelines for fund use, identifying priority projects in advance, and providing regular updates to the community to ensure these resources directly support our housing goals in a timely, equitable, and accountable way.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

I support keeping the fee-in-lieu option, but would consider thoughtful modifications. This tool provides flexibility to address a spectrum of housing needs across the city — from homelessness services and rental support to down payment assistance and construction gap funding for mixed-income housing. When used strategically, these funds can fill critical gaps that on-site units alone may not address. I would support clearer reporting, timelines for spending, and a housing investment plan to ensure the funds are used effectively and equitably to serve residents at all income levels.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Frederick's transportation network is improving, but still uneven. We've expanded bike and pedestrian infrastructure and adopted

a Complete Streets policy, but some areas still lack safe, connected options. I support accelerating sidewalk and crosswalk upgrades, guided by the citywide Sidewalk Condition Survey to prioritize repairs, ADA compliance, and closing gaps near schools and senior housing. Completing Rails-with-Trails, investing in neighborhood traffic calming, and advancing Vision Zero through safer intersections and speed management will create a safer, more accessible city for all residents.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

No, I do not support allowing non-citizens to vote in city elections. Voting is a core civic responsibility that should be reserved for those who have completed the U.S. naturalization process. I deeply respect the contributions of all residents, regardless of status, but I believe extending voting rights to non-citizens diminishes the meaning of citizenship and the commitment it stands for. I was the only member of the council to vote against the charter amendment because this change was premature and lacked broad community consensus.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

No, I do not agree with the decision to cut the tax rate. While reducing the tax rate can offer short-term relief to homeowners, it risks underfunding critical services and infrastructure over time. With Frederick facing growing demands in transportation, affordable housing, public safety, and sustainability initiatives, along with the current environment putting federal funding at risk, maintaining revenue is vital for meeting community needs. I believe responsible budgeting should prioritize stable funding, and any tax adjustment should be contingent on ensuring essential investments and service levels are protected, rather than sacrificing long-term fiscal resilience for immediate rate reductions.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

The city has made several wise investments, such as:

- Funded affordable housing programs through the City Housing Fund
- Funded the construction of new Frederick Police headquarters
- Dedicated \$1 million to sidewalk repairs and traffic calming in FY25
- Invested in Rails-with-Trails and shared-use path expansion
- Supported stormwater and floodplain improvements
- Purchased zero-emission vehicles and installed EV charging stations
- Expanded park space and upgraded playground equipment
- Resurfaced roads and improved drainage through Capital Improvement Program



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While reducing the tax rate can offer short-term relief to homeowners, it risks underfunding critical services and infrastructure over time. ... I believe responsible budgeting should prioritize stable funding.

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City Council At Large

Derek Shackelford



Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: District 3, NAC 11

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Pastor of Asbury-Shepherdstown; CEO of City of Hope.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Vice president of the City Council, 2017-current.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

The city has clear responsibilities between the executive and legislative branches. I have demonstrated the capacity to lead and work in collaboration with others. This is important because the City Council should be efficient and responsive. There must be a sense of urgency for the city to address problems and provide solutions. I believe my temperament would be helpful in serving the City Council, so that all our residents know that they are valued.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

The experience that prepared me for this role encompasses several components. Political science background, current elected office experience, entrepreneur, sports involvement and ministry/pastoral experience. All of this has taught me the importance of compassion, empathy, leadership, listening, and teamwork. These skills have been an important part of my life experience and have allowed me the opportunity to exhibit these skills as a councilmember. Investing in Frederick city in terms of talent, time and treasure has allowed me the ability to demonstrate my commitment to making Frederick a city where people are treated with dignity and access to equal opportunity.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

The most important issue in this race is how the city addresses affordability in terms of how this affects the quality of life for our residents from housing, supporting the most vulnerable and planning for our future. It is important that we use our resources wisely in making investments that continue to expand opportunities. This includes that our budget process is thorough and with community input. The city must collaborate with advocates and continue to develop partnerships. Specifically, this means to be pragmatic yet bold with our budget, planning wisely for the future and communicating

effectively with our residents.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

The city of Frederick is a good place to do business, and the city should not interfere in the business climate by making it burdensome or difficult for businesses to expand and hire city residents. We are close to major markets such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C. As our city continues to grow, it is important that Frederick expand its business outreach and sector. We should be very aware of ensuring that our permitting process is not cumbersome and preventative. The city has made great strides with the MWBE/Small Business Reserve policy to promote inclusiveness and economic expansion.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

Within every framework of legislative bodies are the opportunities for learning and growth. This respective council has its share of challenges. There are decisions that can be criticized, and it is well within the right of the electorate to do that. A City Council that does not take into consideration the suggestions and voices that it is elected to serve is doing a disservice to the residents. As an elected representative, I understand that ideas may not come from the council, but with the people who are engaged and want what is best for the city. I welcome that.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

The City Council is currently implementing a Housing Work Plan that involves goals, metrics and timetables. Much of this work involves and engages community advocates and partners. The City Council is also reviewing all legislative housing policies. Accessory Dwelling Units, Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Legislation, Zoning Plans/Requirements. This review also includes reevaluating the fee requirement. It will require bold and creative opportunities. Nothing should be off the table when it comes to the housing crisis. There is not one solution. We need a multitude of approaches with collaborative partnerships.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

As the city continues to grow, it is essential that it continues to address infrastructure, bicycle lanes, transit

availability, traffic calming, traffic measures, shared use paths, safe sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks. Connectivity is crucial to healthy traffic patterns and necessary for a growing city. The city has also implemented a Vision Zero Initiative that is a comprehensive approach for safe transportation modules. The city must continue to invest in safe transportation models to meet the growing demand of connectivity for neighborhoods. Our residents must be able to connect to all parts of our city with reliable and safe traffic measures.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I voted for non-citizen voting. The immigration discussion at the federal level is a large game of politics by both political parties. Not to mention how history is trying to be disregarded, distorted and erased. We should not be dehumanizing people. When we as a country can have an honest conversation regarding this nation's history, then we can have an honest conversation regarding immigration in this country. Until we have that honest conversation, I'm going to fight like hell to make sure people's humanity is affirmed.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

As a current city councilmember, I did not vote to cut the tax rate this year. I certainly believe in financial accountability and responsibility. There certainly is an acknowledgment that financial resources should be used with prudence and wisely. Any time that money can be given to the residents in our community who contribute to the quality of life in Frederick city, it should be done with wise financial analysis, so that it is sustainable. It should be over several years and so there is a level and sense of financial predictability for the city and residents.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

In every budget cycle, there are competing priorities, debates of what is important and the urgency of needs. Healthy conversations are needed, and these conversations should be occurring in open settings. The city has made wise investment in the development of Westside Regional Park to have amenities that are long overdue on the west side of the city. The city has invested in composting and sustainable practices. In terms of housing, the city has made important contributions to LIHTC projects. I believe that district representation will help with the budget process and how the city allocates its financial resources.

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The city of Frederick is a good place to do business, and the city should not interfere in the business climate by making it burdensome or difficult for businesses to expand and hire city residents.

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

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City Council At Large

Jennifer Dougherty

Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in: Hood College

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Self-employed, Magoo's Pub & Eatery; licensed Realtor, Radcliffe Realty Group.

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions): Mayor, city of Frederick (2002-2006), candidate for mayor (2005, 2009, 2013, 2017, 2021); Democratic nominee for U.S. House of Representatives (2008).

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

Our problems are growing — higher taxes, rapid development, slow infrastructure investment, traffic, affordability of living in Frederick, and the need for good jobs. Our current government officials have been in office more than 26,380 days and have stopped listening. Government is slow and ineffective. I am a worker. My energy, ideas, and experience can help prioritize our spending, reinvigorate the Neighborhood Advisory Councils, and make the council work with purpose.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

As a small business owner, I know how to handle multiple tasks, work with a deadline, manage employees, and manage a budget. Every few years, outside events — Wall Street crash, housing crisis, COVID-19 — require small business owners to adjust daily operations. It can make operations better. When I took office, our water infrastructure was in crisis. I can look at problems, work with the experts, develop and implement solutions. Not everything should be a crisis, and nothing should be a secret! I created the NAC to give residents their "soap box" to keep city officials aware of issues.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

Affordability is the most important issue. The average home price is over \$450,000, average rent is over \$1,900, and property taxes continue to stretch budgets to the breaking point. A review of our development priorities should make the council encourage a greater mix of housing sizes and styles with review of the impact fee schedule to encourage smaller units. Rental units do not have the benefit of the Homestead Property Tax Credit, so the property tax increases must be passed on to the tenant. A review of

extending the HPTC to rental units can slow rental increases.

4 – How would you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Fair. People expect a level playing field and we lost that philosophy. To improve, we need clear deadlines on capital projects, to prioritize public works projects, and to avoid "leapfrogging" special-interest projects into the development process.

Problem: Vacant commercial site still in court, no deadline, lost opportunity for affordable housing/commercial space.

Problem: Cricket stadium — rushed through despite legitimate concerns about traffic, parking, congestion, building in a floodplain, and economic impact. Action: Require full analysis of project before approval and restrict any approvals to current proposal.

Problem: Growing homeless population on Carroll Creek, sleeping overnight. Action: Police kiosk on creek.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

The charter reform turned into "election reform." The work was assigned to a task force and took three years to complete. In the mayor/board system, these issues could have been discussed and reviewed in workshops and addressed in their first year. The end product felt rushed, delivered council boundaries that don't reflect traditional neighborhoods, and left the public confused. Mistakes on the ability to override a veto proved large. Term limits were passed, but exempted themselves.

There was no need to switch from the mayor/board system during a term, making the council learn a new system.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying, or eliminating the fee the developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be "moderately priced"? Why? (100 words max)

The system is not working and the incumbents did not monitor the results. I propose a 90-Day Housing Study Group to deliver a list of changes to current policies. Two council members, business leaders in housing/real estate/banking, nonprofits, NACs, City Finance and Planning can produce a menu for the council to include in their first budget discussions.

My goals for the group would include identifying 100 units per year for four years, including converting vacant properties, dedicating space for temporary mobile housing, and using existing funds for land purchases.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

The system is crowded and incomplete. The new developments are taxing existing roads. Drivers use neighborhood roads to divert, placing burdens on streets not built for through traffic. Local roads need traffic calming efforts that suit the spot.

Transit is growing in use, but a downtown express shuttle from the west side to the Square Corner could help reduce congestion.

Mass transit to D.C. Metro needs a review of the monorail option along I-270.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

No, I think you are a citizen of one place and permitted to vote there. If I opened a business in Ireland, but remained a U.S. resident, I would not be permitted to vote there. Other communities in Maryland allow non-citizens to vote, but place more restrictions (i.e., green card, no criminal record, children in school). In addition, this plan places a target on the back of people who may not be here legally.

It is also important that the city re-examine the ability of unaffiliated voters to participate in the primary election by choosing a "D" or "R" ballot.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

Yes. The fund balance of "\$8.5 million beyond required financial policies" (Michael O'Connor FY26 budget letter) is excessive. This budget had nearly \$1 million included for upgrading salaries because the previous salary study was inadequate; more than \$3 million for new vehicles; and \$2.3 million for new equipment. The mayor's budget proposed to take all new tax revenue for reserves rather than holding the line on spending.

With water and sewer bills going up to pay direct operating costs, it is necessary to control other spending. Residents need to believe the elected officials are listening to their concerns.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

It's a political campaign, it's easy to find problems, but I want to focus on services and accountability.

I propose we restore some lost services to residents — sidewalk repair/replacement, bulk trash pickup, leaf collection.

I propose the creation of an inspector general to report to the City Council to monitor spending, projects, and contracts in real time.

This budget reflected a 10.10% increase in salaries. 269 employees were to get adjustments for previous inequities. How did that occur?

We had little follow-up on the \$280,000 payment to a criminal, but an IG could keep the council and public informed.



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Affordability is the most important issue. The average home price is over \$450,000, average rent is over \$1,900, and property taxes continue to stretch budgets to the breaking point.

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City Council At Large

Libby Taylor



Political party: Democrat

Which neighborhood you live in:
Rosedale

Current occupation and employers (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Health policy analyst, Maryland Department of Health

Political experience (public offices held and when; as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; do not include political party positions):
This is my first run for a political office.

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I do not agree with the City Council's proposal to cut the tax rate. The intent was likely to provide relief to property owners, but there were potential trade-offs in service delivery.

1 – Why are you running for City Council? (75 words max)

I've spent my career helping others — originally meeting individuals' needs, now at a policy level. Local government can drive real, lasting change. As a new mom, my daughter makes me brave enough to put myself out there to offer a different perspective. I see barriers as opportunities to build a stronger, more inclusive Frederick. I want to bring thoughtful, compassionate leadership to City Hall and make Frederick a place where everyone can thrive.

2 – What experience (work/political/other) prepared you for this role? (100 words max)

My career has centered on public service, policy, and advocacy. I've worked as a case manager supporting marginalized communities, provided constituent services and policy research for the Colorado General Assembly, and served as a health policy analyst for Maryland Medicaid. I've advocated for health equity through legislation and now lead neighborhood engagement efforts in Frederick as chair of the NAC Ad Hoc Committee. In my current role, I research, implement, and evaluate public health policies. This blend of legislative, advocacy, and community experience has prepared me to serve with accountability and purpose on City Council.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race? How specifically would you address it? (100 words max)

The most important issue in this race is protecting and improving quality of life for Frederick residents. Rapid development, rising housing costs, and lack of accessible childcare are deeply connected — and they impact households every day. I would support smart, community-informed development that includes affordable housing, invest in infrastructure that supports working households, and advocate for zoning and funding solutions that expand childcare

access. These aren't isolated issues — they're structural challenges that require coordinated, forward-thinking policies. I bring experience in policy research and implementation to help ensure Frederick grows in a way that's equitable, sustainable, and community-centered.

4 – How do you rate the city's business climate? What changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Frederick's business climate is strong, but there are barriers that make it harder than necessary to open or grow a small business. I've heard from local owners about costly, one-size-fits-all requirements — like an ice cream shop needing to install and maintain a grease trap despite not serving hot food. It's a small example, but it points to a larger issue: our permitting and regulatory processes need to be more flexible and responsive to a business's actual operations. I would work to streamline processes and improve coordination between city departments to better support entrepreneurs.

5 – What is one major issue the current City Council has handled poorly? What would you have done differently? (100 words max)

One major issue the current Council has handled poorly is the stalled implementation of key planning efforts — especially the East Frederick Form-Based Code, which has yet to advance beyond draft stages despite multiple public workshops. Plans for small area studies like East Street and East Patrick have similarly lagged, with few visible steps toward execution. I would prioritize turning those studies into action by setting a clear timeline, allocating dedicated implementation funding, and ensuring regular public updates and accountability.

6 – Do you support keeping, modifying or eliminating the fee developers may pay in place of a requirement that 12.5% of new housing be “moderately priced”? Why? (100 words max)

Fee-in-lieu for affordable housing should be removed. The policy is not fulfilling its intended purpose. Instead of building moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs), developers often pay a set fee per square foot allowing them to avoid actual housing construction. The fee-in-lieu rates don't match rising construction and land costs, nor the burden of infrastructure and service demands from growth. Increasing the fee is an option, but that still might not result in more MPDUs.

7 – How do you assess the city's transportation network and road

system? What specific changes, if any, would you make? (100 words max)

Traffic is one of the top issues constituents raise. Residents worry about speeding in several parts of the city — on 7th Street, neighbors often have their mirrors hit by fast-moving cars. U.S. 15 has rush-hour traffic that's getting worse. While some traffic is part of city life, we need to listen to residents about what level is acceptable and take action. I would work closely with the city's Engineering Department to implement traffic calming, upgrade bottlenecks, accelerate projects like Christopher's Crossing, and make our streets safer and more pedestrian-friendly — all while planning for Frederick's long-term growth.

8 – Should the city allow all residents to vote regardless of immigration status? Why or why not? (100 words max)

Yes, all residents of Frederick should be allowed to vote. Noncitizen residents often own homes, run businesses, send their children to public schools, and pay local taxes. Voting can encourage participation in local processes and empower marginalized voices.

Also, Frederick should have an open primary, so regardless of party, everyone should be able to vote.

9 – Do you agree with the current City Council's decision to cut the tax rate? Why or why not? (100 words max)

I do not agree with the City Council's proposal to cut the tax rate. The intent was likely to provide relief to property owners, but there were potential trade-offs in service delivery. While canvassing the neighborhoods, homeowners shared with me that they'd rather have more significant cuts to property taxes, or have it stay the same and city services improve.

However, there should be more collaboration between the City Council and the mayor in regards to the budget and policy.

10 – Has the city spent its money wisely? Give specific examples. (100 words max)

This is a challenging question because it's not always clear how much the city has or how it's being spent — which is why I'm advocating for greater financial transparency. One preventable cost is the upcoming \$1.3 million restoration of the Edge of Gravity mural. With regular maintenance, the city could have avoided such a large expense. Additionally, I've heard from constituents who are concerned about the \$3 million spent on new vehicles.

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