

ELECTION

KILLEEN COUNCIL

Candidates were allowed 100 words per answer. Some answers that went beyond that amount were trimmed for space reasons.

Ramon Alvarez, 43, small-business owner/ EMT-b/ licensed Texas realtor, some college education



Mellisa Brown, 41, caretaker and council-member, and bachelor's degree



Leo Gukeisen, 57, Security Manager and U.S. Army Retired, criminal justice associate degree



What are the top three major issues facing Killeen? What would you propose, if elected, to address them?

Grime-and-Crime, Economic Development and Quality of Life.
To better address the correlation between Crime-and-Grime, I would assist City staff in developing a grassroots effort to inventory the number of abandoned, dilapidated structures which blight our aging residential areas, especially throughout North Killeen. Then we'd move to create a more streamline process for the repair or removal of said abandoned, dilapidated structures. As a 42 year resident of North Killeen I believe that this, in conjunction with the revival of bike patrols and small substations throughout our City would have a lasting, beneficial effect on both the quality of life and crime in these areas.

Besides the usual concerns every year (infrastructure, crime, budget) the next 3 are: Thinking ahead and planning for our future. Adopting and sticking to the new comprehensive plan, enforcing the Traffic impact Analysis, and revising building and subdivision standards will help. Employment. I have requested we review the KEDC structure and oversight so the City can get the types of companies we want and need. Necessities Before Niceties. We have to prioritize needs like taking care of what we have and our current citizens before we put money into new things that are nice but not essential.

Crime: Better Community Relations between the police and residents would go a long way to help reduce the Crime Rate. Jobs: Work with the KEDC to get more high paying jobs into Killeen. Fast food jobs should not be the "bread and butter" jobs families. The way to change it is to get better jobs in Killeen and make the KEDC work for the City and not themselves or the Chamber of Commerce. Activities for the Young: The Council has talked about this for years and failed to accomplish anything. We should get the community more involved and seek ideas from them. The Community holds the answer to this problem.

Why should Killeen voters elect you? What specific qualities do you possess that would make you a good Killeen elected leader?

I was born here, raised here and chose to stay here! I am a product of this community and proud to call Killeen my home. I believe that my combination of being a native Killeenite, former City employee, active community servant in various charitable and civic groups, small business owner and P&Z commissioner provide me with a unique advantage to solving our City's major issues.

I have spent 1½ years working for the citizens and helping with more than what people see on Tuesdays. I ask questions that bring accountability and transparency. I do my research, know what is being brought forward, and make decisions that are in the best interests of Killeen for today and the future.

I am asked why "I am the best person for the position of Killeen City Council-at-Large?" I answer that with "well I could give you the political answer" but the truth is, it is up to you and the rest of the residents to determine if I am the best person to be your Councilmen. All I ask is for each and everyone who see's me to stop and me their questions so you can get a face to face and truthful answer and not some "political" answer.

If elected, what are some things you would do to lower the crime rate in Killeen?

Re-establish bike patrols in downtown and neighborhoods. Re-establish small policing substations throughout the City. Provide our police department with the tools, training and resources it needs in order to better serve our youth and our population as a whole.

Continue to work on different ways to recruit and retain officers, push to partner with existing organizations instead of paying for new programs to be created, and push to bring jobs and activities that are both needed and wanted. I will also continue to work on ways to facilitate a trusting and working relationship between citizens and our officers. If we need to, I am not afraid to ask other agencies to come help Killeen.

This question really can't be answered in just a few words. It is a larger issue that should be addressed with the input of the residents of Killeen, I'll attempt to give a short answer. Economics' is the root of the solution to lower the crime rate in Killeen. We need better types and paying jobs brought into Killeen. Fast food places are not the answer. We have to mandate to the KEDC what types of jobs Killeen wants. The agreement between the City of Killeen and the KEDC says the "city hires KEDC" so if the City hires then the City can fire them.

If elected, what would you do to help increase business in downtown Killeen, where many buildings are vacant?

In addition to the Vacant Buildings Registry Program, I would look to provide innovative solutions for local small businesses. To include but not limited to improved access to police services, community grease traps to help offset costs for startup restaurants, implement the reconstruction of the Rancier corridor using TIRZ funding and evaluate options for the reconstruction of VMB using TX-DOT funding and partnering with KTMO.

I voted to approve downtown activities and grants to bring people to the downtown area. I will continue to encourage the staff to work with existing groups that assist the homeless and prevent homelessness. I will continue to encourage business owners to locate downtown and I will follow the recommendations in our new comprehensive plan.

Honestly the only way to get business into the downtown area is to clean it up and make it more presentable to people. The two major issues with the downtown area are crime and homelessness. I have addressed ways, that are in the City Charter, which could help our Police Department, but no actions have been taken on them. The Homeless issue can not be solved over night, but there are programs out there to help the homeless, but they have to be willing to accept it.

If elected, what would you do to bring more jobs to Killeen?

Look to provide a more sustainable funding mechanism for our EDC, whether via sales tax revenue or similar. If we expect our EDC to bring better paying jobs, industry, entertainment, etc, we must find a better way of funding them instead of directly competing for General Funds. Better funding would provide the opportunity to hire a staff with the experience necessary to carry out this task and provide greater leverage when putting together incentive packages.

To go back to answer 1, I have requested we review the KEDC structure and oversight so the City can get the types of companies we want and need. As a KEDC representative I will continue to emphasize investing in jobs for current citizens that are not service, retail, and call centers. I will continue to advocate for assistance from our County, State, and Regional partners.

In the Agreement between the City of Killeen and the KEDC it states "City does herby employ, engage, and hire KEDC" so if the KEDC is not doing what the City of Killeen is asking then we need to fire them a contract with a legit company or firm that will do what the City of Killeen wants done. We need KEDC to promote what Killeen wants and not what they want.

Do you believe the city does a good job with transparency in government? Please explain.

Yes. That being said, there is always room for improvement. There are numerous things the City, and us as residents, can do to improve our own ideas of transparency. Sometimes the answer is knowing where to look to find public information. It's not always that the information is unavailable, but perhaps that we don't know where to look. So maybe having a one-stop-shop landing page for residents to easily be directed to what they're looking for. If elected my door and phone will always be available.

I think the City has gotten better at transparency in the past 1½ years, but there is always room for improvement. I have suggested a minimum of quarterly townhalls with the council, City Manager, and citizens so there can be open discussions about stakeholder (citizens, business owners, and property owners) concerns and questions. I am responsive to everyone who calls or emails me, and to the media and I actively communicate on social media.

No! I think they hide behind the statement "may not be in the best interest of the resident of Killeen." I have said this before and will continue to say it, that any business the City of Killeen is involved with is of the interest of the residents of Killeen. I understand that there may be legal rights to be considered, but there are still ways to not hide behind the Closed Session.