



LAWRENCE BOARD OF REALTORS®

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2023 CITY COMMISSION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **Mike Dever**

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Biographical Information

Occupation: **Owner of Guidewire Consulting Firm, Environmental Consultant**

Previous Government Experience: **Eight years on the Lawrence City Commission 2007-2015 and two years as Lawrence Mayor. Four years on the Public Incentive Review Committee.**

Involvement in Community Activities: **Board Member for Lawrence Sister Cities Organization, Founding Member of the LRTC/BTBC/KUIP, KU Innovation Park, 7 years as Treasurer, Public Incentive Review Committee, Freedoms Frontier National Heritage Area Founding Board Member, Volunteer and contributor to multiple non-profit organizations, youth sports and programs, and school activities throughout the years.**

Positions on Important Issues

Priority Issues:

1. What are your three top public policy priorities if you are elected to the City Commission?

1) Creation of a short-term plan for managing the challenges of new and existing unhoused and transient population. Work with area agencies and experts to pull together a cohesive plan of action and communication, to ensure all efforts are coordinated and working together to find common solutions to our challenges.

2) Annexation and development of residential, commercial and industrial land.

3) Creative infill developments where appropriate.

Housing Policy:

2. What does "housing affordability" mean to you?

Generally, “housing affordability” to me means an owner occupier or renter can afford to live in their chosen residence without paying more than their reasonable gross income, (average 30% or less according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development), in housing expense plus utilities.

3. Several studies, local and state-wide, have confirmed that Lawrence has insufficient housing inventory to meet market demand. As a result, Lawrence has seen housing prices rise faster than neighboring communities. How would you suggest Lawrence address this availability and affordability gap?

Lawrence should create an environment where developers and builders want to construct the housing needed by fostering a predictable, transparent and consistent planning department focused on this goal. This starts with the leadership of the community implementing the goals for providing additional housing in the community as well as directing staff to make the process more cost effective.

4. The Lawrence Board of Realtors® believes that everyone in Lawrence should have access to safe, affordable housing and that everyone should be able to experience homeownership within their means. Meeting the demand for moderately priced housing is difficult. The City of Lawrence has identified Affordable Housing as a major priority. Do you support development policies that increase the cost of residential development? Please explain.

I do not support policies that increase the cost of development, and want to explore incentives to help decrease the cost of infill development and affordable housing projects to fill the existing gaps.

Would you support new development policies that would incentivize new residential development meeting market demand to supply workforce housing at \$250,000 or less? Please explain.

I am in favor of these policies and believe the market is not currently serving this segment due to the lack of accessible, platted lots and the small profit to be gained from the use of existing lots for work force housing. There are many creative cooperatives for building market force housing being developed by private builders that would work well in our community, however the lack of available, buildable lots is forcing them to build elsewhere. If we focus on maximizing the use of land with existing infrastructure that has excess capacity, the base cost for the city is much lower and can help underwrite the construction of more workforce housing.

5. The City of Lawrence recently passed Ordinance 6690, providing protections in housing based on source of income and immigration status. The Lawrence Board of Realtors® raised several concerns regarding how the ordinance will impact sales transactions and Landlords of Lawrence have filed a lawsuit challenging the ordinance. What is your position on source of income and immigration status protections?

I believe housing is in high demand and landlords can rent to many citizens not impacted by ORD 6690. The ordinance will likely have little impact on the availability of housing without guarantee/incentive. Governmental incentives are usually a more effective tool in garnering the results needed to make the process of buying or renting a residence more inclusive.

How do you feel about going further to limit a Landlord from using a background check and/or credit history to evaluate rental applicants?

Many on the margins struggle to provide a history of their lives, and end up homeless and without credit. Landlords need to have an autonomy to protect their investment and the community needs safe housing. Lawrence should encourage landlords to rent to those on the margins, while providing protections. I am not in favor of additional governmental oversight.

6. Lawrence has experienced unprecedented growth in the unhoused population in the last several years. What role do you believe the City should play in addressing this issue?

The city has chosen to participate, and now we must take control. With the lack of a comprehensive plan for the unhoused population, enumeration and agency coordination must be addressed immediately. I believe we need rules, enforcement and accountability to ensure we control our existing population, and protect our tax paying citizens who deserve to live in a community that is safe and attractive to those who live here and those considering a move to Lawrence.

7. The City is currently undergoing a review and re-write of the Land Development Code. What changes to zoning, design, historic preservation, or other requirements in the Land Development Code do you think would encourage housing development?

In a town where we have lack of inventory of available homes for sale, I think we must re-imagine how we interact with the code and use every square foot of land in our urban core for beneficial use. We should consider specific changes to setback and parking requirements, and focus being on a more walkable community. That includes more density in specific target areas of the community and being more open to a variety of housing in a variety of densities.

Energy Efficiency

8. In March 2020, the City of Lawrence adopted Ordinance 9744, establishing a goal of 100% clean, renewable energy in all municipal operations by 2025 and city-wide by 2030. The Kansas Legislature pre-empted this ordinance during the 2021 session with the Energy Choice Act. What is your opinion regarding clean energy policies and how should we balance environmentally conscious policies with the rising cost of housing and utilities?

The city of Lawrence should simultaneously focus on sustainability and attainability. The City had the vision to begin reliance on renewables and wanted to encourage others to follow. However, if the government is making the cost of housing and living more expensive due to rules, the residents will seek other more affordable and appealing places to live. As an environmental consultant, I have studied sustainability for years. However environmental sustainability should not come at the cost of economic and social sustainability. I would prefer the commission focus on creating a more walkable, connected community with innovative neighborhoods and designs that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and our overall consumption.

Economic Development:

9. When appropriate, do you support the use of economic development incentives (such as industrial

revenue bonds, tax abatements, rebates, community improvement districts, etc.) to attract or retain jobs and economic development investments in our community? Please explain your answer.

Yes, EDI's are but one tool for the community to encourage local investment. The city has invested in the past and has not suffered from their use. Such opportunities are rare and tools should be used wisely.

10. How would you propose to balance the need for economic development and increasing density in our City with preservation of the City's character and historic resources and monuments?

The City has focused on Historic Preservation beyond the state and federal requirements for many years. That heightened oversight has negative and positive consequences, and I believe we should evaluate extraneous oversight given the severe lack of housing and development in our community. HRC has become a substantial hurdle to many viable infill projects in Lawrence, and some of our most historic neighborhoods are losing their local schools and new investment partially due to the overall difficulty of redeveloping historic neighborhoods or environs. Balancing history and needed housing is a difficult task, and we should have a community discussion about what is most important to us and execute that vision.

City Budget Issues and Property Taxes:

11. In terms of your priorities on the City Commission, how highly would you prioritize your commitment to decreasing, or limiting future increases in the mill levy rate?

The city should be focused on maintaining the mill levy relative to the city services desired and not dramatically increase it unless services are added, or the community is in favor of the increase. During my previous service on the city commission, maintaining a stable mill levy rate was a top priority and we did so during economic crisis and during times of growth.

Thank you for your valuable time and cooperation in completing this candidate questionnaire. Your response will be greatly appreciated and will be distributed to our membership so they can make an adequate judgment on the merits of the candidates. Please return this questionnaire to our office by July 14, 2023.

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