

The BeaconNews

Candidate Questionnaire

If the economy continues on its current path, what would you like the city to do to reduce spending?

We must be fiscally responsible at all times, not just when there are economic challenges.

We all work extremely hard for our money. We want our government, on all levels, to spend our tax dollars responsibly and to address the core issues that affect our life, such as roads and infrastructure, neighborhood issues, crime and our schools.

As to the reduction of spending, these suggestions should be implemented even when the economy improves:

- Streamline development departments and staff (overlap exists with economic development, community development, downtown development, neighborhood development).
- Realign upper management and eliminate 15% of staff
- Streamline committees and departments dealing with project proposals, development, planning commission, permits and zoning
- Eliminate Aurora Election Commission and transfer responsibility to counties
- Focus efforts on true economic development and re-evaluate questionable projects at taxpayer expense currently in the pipeline such as River's Edge Park (estimated at \$15 million for first of three phases) and Shodeen project (with significant taxpayer risk and estimated at a minimum of \$70 million taxpayer subsidy)
- Re-evaluate all subsidies, grants and programs for social service and outside agencies and establish outcome-based requirements, benchmarks and accountability for results and efficiency; actual dollars committed to our goals may not necessarily be reduced, but the efficiency of the way those dollars are spent must be increased
- Use electronic communication to dramatically reduce expense, time, paper and waste

Please list a few ways you would encourage new businesses to locate to Aurora. Do you believe financial incentives, such as tax rebates, are a good tool for commercial development, or should they be used sparingly?

In 2005, I met with developer Joseph Vantreese and we proposed one of the most significant economic development projects in Aurora's history and successfully have implemented the first phase of River Street Plaza, a mixed-used condo development that is the catalyst for downtown Aurora's transformation and generates tax revenue for the city and school district.

To attract a business, we need a well-balanced community:

Government:

Must have a fiscally-responsible government.

Must have an expeditious process for projects from concept to completion.

Must have an effective government that recognizes, understands and proactively addresses crime, blight, and negative perception.

Education System and Workforce Development:

Our education system is essential to attracting outside business and those individuals that would relocate to Aurora.

The performance and success of our education system provides opportunities and benefits to becoming part of our community.

Infrastructure:

We should continue to support the upgrades to our sewer and infrastructure systems that the current administration has begun to address. However, I would improve the methods and standards in our road construction. We need to seriously address the blight and condition of our major gateways such as New York, Lake, Farnsworth and Indian Trail.

Incentives:

Any incentive should be used responsibly and each project should be evaluated individually based upon the overall benefit to the community and measurable return on investment to taxpayers.

How do you feel the \$580,000 per year ward funds should be spent by aldermen? Would you support a cap on non-infrastructure-related expenses?

The wards are divided by population, but our infrastructure needs are not equal, so the ward fund concept is dysfunctional and should be abolished. I would support creating a limited discretionary fund with strict guidelines and oversight.

Instead of each Alderman determining which roads are to be completed on an annual basis, we must have a comprehensive citywide plan that coordinates roads, sewers and water systems. Such a plan does not currently exist and should be long-term, funded and adjusted to address infrastructure priorities and measured for progress.

How important are ward committees? How do you, or would you, organize your committee and run it?

Ward committees are important as any neighborhood group or committee. It's a discussion and exchange of ideas and I value people's opinions and counsel.

In our committee, we do not have a formal hierarchy. We are open to anyone and encourage all views.

Do you think the City Council has enough check-and-balance power on the mayor's office? Why or why not? If not, what can be done about it?

Currently, I am the check-and-balance of the city council.

Citywide, what are your top three specific priorities?

We must have a fiscally responsible and efficient city government that understands and prioritizes our infrastructure needs, economic development that generates important tax revenue for the city and schools, reducing crime and blight and insuring the success of our education system.

In your ward, what are your top three specific priorities?

Continue progress on improving our neighborhoods, roads, infrastructure, fostering relationships between our residents and police to reduce crime, collaborating with public and private schools to strengthen our education system.

What's working well in Aurora these days? What's not?

What's working well: In the 4th Ward, we have made progress with economic development with River Street Plaza and sparking the transformation of downtown Aurora. We have made significant progress reducing crime, revamping public housing such as Jericho Circle and improving collaboration with School District 129. Relationships and communication with neighborhood groups and residents are working extremely well to identify issues and find solutions.

What's not working well: The fiscal responsibility, accountability, return on investment and overall cost to the taxpayers of Aurora to live in our community.

For the incumbent – Why should you be re-elected over the challengers?

I made a promise to my wife that if we were to raise our daughters here, I would do everything I could to make Aurora a better place to live. I never forgot that promise and have the same commitment to all of the families of our city.

As a business owner and taxpayer, I have tremendous respect for the tax dollars we pay and take that responsibility seriously. I continue to seek ways to reduce spending, reduce risks and find ways to encourage our government to do better as to how financial decisions are made with greater transparency and accountability, so we can focus on the core responsibilities and priorities.

Neighborhood groups and myself have proved how a cooperative and direct approach toward issues from blighted properties to serious criminal activity to simple, but important issues faced by residents can be effectively and quickly addressed.

Our efforts in reducing crime, revamping Jericho Circle and the economic development success of River Street Plaza have been recognized by the 2008 Excellence in Government Award by the Illinois State Crime Commission and most recently, affirmed by the unanimous vote of support by sworn officers of the Aurora Police Department in their endorsement.

I will continue to focus on improving our roads and infrastructure, addressing crime and neighborhood issues, finding ways to help our schools succeed and develop our tax base.

Most importantly, I will continue to stand up for what is right.