

**Melanie Piana, Ferndale City Council  
Citizens for a Fair Ferndale  
Candidate Profile**

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**1. Why did you decide to run for Mayor/Council?**

Over the past four years, I focused on strengthening what the City of Ferndale does well, correcting course where necessary and looking forward strategically. It hasn't been an easy road because of decreasing revenues and expectations of continued service. We needed to reassess how the city meets service expectations with limited resources, rethink how we communicate with residents and improve customer service. My experience helping communities rethink how they do things has been a key focus of mine while serving on city council. For me, many areas are a work in progress—we have more to do.

I'm running for a second term to continue the momentum of working together to grow our thriving city.

**2. What is your vision for Ferndale? Over the next four years? Over the next ten years?**

I envision a community that uses its collective creative spirit to build a place where we can live, grow our families and businesses, and play.

I see a community better connecting people to their places of work to where they live and where they play. I envision more bike lanes and mass transit down Woodward, and a successful regional transportation system. Our downtown will have taller buildings, more modern office space and more housing availability. It will be safer to cross from one side of Woodward to the other. Our neighborhoods will be stronger and our parks will have modern amenities that make our natural areas amazing creative spaces for people to gather. Our government will be more citizen-focused than it is today.

**3. What two (2) things are you going to do that will bring your vision to reality?**

One: I'm committed to creating a safer walkable community and providing more transportation choices. These are essential to becoming a successful sustainable community—environmentally and financially. In my first term, I drafted and presented one of the state's first Complete Streets ordinances, demonstrating that Ferndale is a leader that wants to make our streets more accessible and safer for all users—motorists, bicyclists, walkers or wheelchair users and transit riders. I co-founded the "Transform Woodward" Task Force which won a \$2.5 million grant to bring rapid transit to south Oakland County. I will continue to invest in these strategies and set policies that encourage new residents and new businesses to choose to live, grow and play in our city.

Two: I support a citizen focused government that is responsive to residents. In my first term, I focused on improving how the city communicates with residents. We launched a new city website and added new ways to connect with city leaders via social media like Facebook and Twitter. The lack of communication tools became very apparent my first year on council, when we had significant citywide power outages.

I'll continue to seek out effective ways the city can become more inclusive with citizen engagement. For example, I'm encouraging the city to adopt priority driven budgeting which is a fundamental change in the way resources are allocated. This requires a collaborative and evidence-based approach to ensure what our government does measures up to community priorities and includes heavy public participation.

**4. Of all the issues facing Ferndale, what two (2) would you give top priority and why?**

Sustainable revenues to pay for essential services:

In 2011, residents voted for a Headlee Override to help boost city revenues to pay for essential services like police and fire. In 2016, the Headlee override ride sunsets. The five year period provides city council time to find models for providing services, such as a fire authority between neighboring cities.

Streets and sewers bond renewal:

Approximately 20 years ago, residents voted on a streets bond to maintain our local streets and improve our sewers. The city relies on these voter approved bonds to pay for sewer upgrades and local street repair, paving and maintenance. Our current bond ends in 2015 and we need to renew it. The city and residents will need to identify and prioritize projects to be included in the next bond and how much it will cost.

**5. Ferndale prides itself on an active citizenry.**

**A) What two (2) things would you tell someone who "just wanted to help", or who "just wanted to get involved"?**

I get asked this question frequently. I always inquire what the individual is interested in, and then provide suggestions to

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see what will align with their personal interests. Of course, I always convey the need for residents helping out the city either by sitting on a board or commission or volunteering at the DDA. Or becoming an election worker (which we have a need now if you are interested...).

Our city has something other cities aspire to have: an active citizenry. We have so many non-profits in Ferndale that need volunteers. The hard part is narrowing your choices!

**B) Please list and briefly describe three (3) resources (print, electronic, or otherwise) that residents who want to get involved should go to for ideas, background, facts or figures.**

The Ferndale Library <http://www.ferndale.lib.mi.us>

City websites: [www.ferndalemi.gov](http://www.ferndalemi.gov) and [www.downtownferndale.com](http://www.downtownferndale.com)

Ferndale115.com

Ferndale Chamber of Commerce

**6. How do you see the council and other city leaders continuing and enhancing communication and collaboration with other organizations, municipalities and our school district? Please offer specific examples.**

My personal guiding principles for leadership is being proactive, open minded, flexible collaborative and resourceful. I practice these guiding principles every day as a city councilwoman. I co-founded The Dales Neighborhood association because neighbors coming together help improve livability in the neighborhood. Residents also needed a new way to communicate with the school district to better understand the new Digital Learning Center and the student crime situations that impact the neighborhood. I convened the city, neighborhood residents and the school administration to hear the concerns from residents about the school crime. Building relationships, consensus building and problem solving are important to enhancing communications with other organizations.

My personal belief is that Ferndale government must be a leader in service sharing and collaboration with our municipal neighbors, identifying where partnerships provide the most value and make the most sense. I work continuously with our neighboring communities along the Woodward Corridor on transit, collaborate with Hazel Park for a potential fire authority, and support sharing recreation programs with Oak Park, just to cite a few examples.

Sometimes innovation does not result in a successful partnership, but at least we tried and learned from the attempt. When the city ended its own animal control service, and before we learned Oakland County provided the service to communities at no cost, city council entertained a partnership with a non-profit to fill a gap sheltering stray dogs and cats. We learned that this partnership was not the best value for both organizations, more so when the County provided animal control services for free.

**7. Please explain the importance of the city's Master Plan. Is it still relevant in this economic climate? When and how should it be reviewed?**

A city is required to update their master plan every five years by state law (Michigan Planning Enabling Act). A Master Plan is important because it serves as a compass that charts out a path for how a city wants to grow and asks citizens to drive the engagement process. A plan is only as good as a community supports it and such a plan is totally essential to creating a sustainable community, more so in a struggling economic climate. Strategies need to change in response to market changes, and a Master Plan is the community's vision for how it wants to grow in the future and sets land use policies to make those strategies a reality.

The city of Ferndale's five year master plan anniversary is this December 2013. Cities can make amendments to their master plan; the multi-modal transportation plan will be included as a partial update in Ferndale's master plan. The planning commission is looking at how to update the city's master plan for 2014.

**8. The Ferndale City Council just passed a Good Neighbor Civility Resolution. How would you as Mayor/Council Member promote the message of civility in Ferndale?**

The best way to promote civility is by remaining civil—it starts with me. City council is known for its civility among its own members, treating everyone respectfully when they have disagreements, but also when citizens disagree with their elected officials. Difficult conversations need a safe space so that everyone is heard and no one ignored. Through my own actions, I can promote the message of civility; inform others about the city's commitment to promoting community through civility leadership and informing residents about the Citizens for a Fair Ferndale civility project.