



Citizens for a **Fair Ferndale**

2023 City of Ferndale Councilperson Candidate Questionnaire

1. What has led you to run for City Council of Ferndale? What experience do you bring to this position?
 - a. **I have been involved in the community since moving here in 2015. Three months after I moved to Ferndale, I volunteered to work an election. That was the start of a long and rewarding journey of public service here. I currently chair the Civil Service Board, on which I have served for eight years; I am a commissioner on the Ferndale Housing Commission, having just started my second five-year term early in the summer; I worked every election from 2015 through 2020, mostly as chair of Precinct 9; I served on the board of Affirmations Gay & Lesbian Community Center for six years, stepping down in January 2023 in preparation to run for city council; and in 2022, I chaired Ferndale's resident-led City Facilities Task Force, assessing the condition of, and providing a plan to improve, Ferndale's municipal facilities.**

By day, I'm the Associate Budget Director for the City of Detroit, having served in a few capacities in the city government for eight years. I oversee a portfolio of departments and initiatives including Public Works, Transportation, General Services, Demolition & Construction, Water & Sewerage, Public Lighting, and Housing & Economic Development to name a few. I have participated at the highest levels of Detroit's revitalization efforts post-bankruptcy, having joined the city in 2015 to do just that. I have extensive experience managing billions of dollars, improving existing programs and services, establishing new programs and services, and negotiating funding from both higher levels of government and philanthropy.
2. What is your position on affordable housing in Ferndale?
 - a. **I am unapologetic about my position that Ferndale needs more affordable and attainable housing, accessible housing for residents with disabilities, and even more public housing via the Ferndale Housing Commission. Through zoning reforms, we can push forward with Missing Middle housing solutions, including infill housing in existing neighborhoods through the use of currently vacant parcels and the replacement of vacant structures with small format multifamily solutions like duplexes, triplexes, or fourplexes. While we must also address the consequent impact on parking and traffic patterns in some residential neighborhoods, I will always weight the needs of human beings for safe, affordable homes over the needs of vehicles.**

3. What is your vision for the future of development in Ferndale?
 - a. **Development is a necessity for any community that seeks to stay viable and solvent. However, it is important for development and growth to be balanced with the overall needs and characteristics of a community. Ferndale must be proactive with its economic development activities, seeking out developers and investments that we want instead of waiting for just anyone to fall into our lap. A passive approach to development means that the government is more inclined to take what's being offered instead of starting from a position of control over the process. Establishing clear criteria and development goals allow us to filter more quickly for the types of investments we desire. Gradual, thoughtful growth will ultimately benefit all residents more than simply grabbing at any opportunity as quickly as possible.**

4. What are the ways in which you see Ferndale moving toward racial equity?
 - a. **As the recent CAIR report shows, Ferndale still has work to do in the realm of racial equity. We must continue to mandate training for our public servants, including our police officers, to combat implicit biases. We must examine further changes to our city policing policies that would deprioritize activities like traffic stops in cases where the vehicle is not engaging in a truly hazardous activity. We must also continue to elevate our communities of color through proactive outreach and involvement in city government through appointments to boards and commissions, the Fern and Learn program, and mentoring programs to bring more people of color into elected office in Ferndale.**

5. What is your position on climate sustainability as it relates to city government?
 - a. **City governments must be the primary drivers of sustainability initiatives. Local government can be a powerful agent of change both practically speaking with infrastructure and in cultural terms by normalizing and supporting methods to combat global climate change. Local governments are closest to the people and it is through that close relationship that they can begin to create grassroots buy-in on the necessary, though sometimes difficult, changes we must make to not only reduce our impact on the environment but also implement resiliency improvements to weather the effects of what has already been done.**

While grassroots and civil society organizations are vital to the effort, governments at all levels have the weight and regulatory power to make things happen in the short term and for generations to come.

6. What is your position on the financial state of the city, and the Headlee Override?
 - a. **As a municipal budgeting and finance professional, I believe the Ferndale city government is in reasonably stable financial condition. However, like every municipal government in Michigan, it is heavily reliant on property taxes as its primary revenue**

stream. These taxes, while high, are a necessary evil.

I support a renewal of Ferndale's Headlee Override at the same rate. A renewal is critical to the sustainability of our city government and the services on which Ferndale residents rely. Without this override, Ferndale would lose almost 24% of its general fund, an existential crisis mandating service reductions and staff layoffs. I work for the city that serves as an example to the entire world of what happens when a municipal government drastically cuts services to match a devastated general fund. The city of Ferndale cannot afford to take that path.

7. What do you think will be your greatest challenge if you are elected to this position, and how do you see yourself overcoming it?
 - a. **Implementing affordable housing solutions. Getting more widespread support in the community is challenging, along with the lack of undevelopment land in our landlocked city upon which we could develop affordable units. Addressing parking and traffic concerns that necessary attend the creation of more density via more housing will also be an interesting facet of the problem to solve.**

Overcoming this challenge will require constant community engagement and education, rigorous conversations with developers about affordable housing requirements, and constant pushing upward on Pontiac and Lansing to implement policies and legislation that ease the path for more housing developments in smaller communities like Ferndale. I am fortunate to have very strong working relationships with our elected leaders in Pontiac and Lansing both personally and through my work with the City of Detroit. Working with regional leaders and the RTA on transit solutions can also begin to ease the pressures on parking and traffic management.