

Rolanda Kelley for Council

What has led me to run for City Council of Ferndale? What experience do I bring to this position?

I've embarked on this journey to run for Ferndale City Council because my love for this city runs deep, and I'm fueled by a strong desire to serve Ferndale residents and contribute to the betterment of their community. I am dedicated to being an agent for positive change by addressing the concerns of residents.

With over two decades of leadership experience as a senior-level manager at Costco, I bring invaluable skills that are highly relevant to this position on council. In my role at Costco, a fast-paced, high energy environment, I successfully lead and manage large teams of people, recruit, train and develop employees, manage budgets, and champion diversity and inclusion. These skills are not only about managing retail operations, they are about creating a positive and productive work environment that fosters employee satisfaction, engagement and development. Both my leadership and communication skills will be effective while collaborating with other members on council and listening to constituents.

My political experience in roles such as:

- Precinct 1 Elected Delegate
- Chair of the Ferndale Area Democrats
- Chair of the LGBTQ+ Committee for the Oakland County Democratic Party
- Vice Chair of the Unity Fund
- 1st Vice Chair of the Michigan's 11th Congressional District Democratic Party

have provided me with opportunities to build strong relationships within our community and beyond. My extensive involvement in these roles have also given me valuable political and advocacy experience, which I'll use to navigate the political landscape and effectively advocate for Ferndale's interests at higher levels of government.

I have also dedicated myself to community building, networking, and building relationships through my involvement serving on committees, such as the Ferndale Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Vision Committee .

My experience as an Event Chair for Ferndale Pride's Rainbow Raffle Fundraiser has honed my skills in bringing people together for a common cause, cultivating a sense of belonging, and supporting local initiatives.

In summary, my experience and skill set revolve around advocacy, community engagement, and the ability to connect with others. These qualities will guide my service as a City Council member, ensuring that I represent our community with unwavering dedication.

What is my position on affordable housing in Ferndale?

I firmly believe that everyone in our community should have access to safe and affordable homes. First and foremost, I want to make sure our approach to affordable housing is inclusive and fair. That means considering the unique needs of all our residents, whether it's families struggling to make ends meet, a recent college grad, a person working in the service industry, seniors looking to age in place, or individuals with disabilities.

Collaboration is key. I'm all about working together with local organizations, experts, and community members to come up with practical solutions that match Ferndale's specific housing challenges. This includes promoting missing middle housing, which can provide more affordable options like duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings within our neighborhoods, all while preserving the character and uniqueness we all love about Ferndale.

I'm also committed to utilizing resources like grants and the Oakland County Housing Trust Fund to support our affordable housing initiatives. These funds can provide a crucial boost in our efforts to make housing more accessible to all residents.

When it comes to policies, my priority is to enact changes that truly make a difference. We can continue to address zoning reform to encourage more housing options and support developers who share our commitment to affordable homes.

Housing stability isn't just about having a roof over your head; it's about building a stronger, more diverse and prosperous community. That's why I'm passionate about ensuring that everyone in Ferndale has stable housing.

Lastly, my approach involves robust community involvement in decision-making processes for development projects. It's essential to ensure that our residents' feedback actively shapes these developments.

Looking ahead, my vision for Ferndale is one where affordable housing isn't just a short-term plan but a long-term, sustainable solution that adapts to our evolving needs.

What is my vision for the future of development in Ferndale?

When I envision Ferndale's future, creating a community that grows in a sustainable and responsible way is of utmost importance. What this means to me is that, while our city will inevitably continue to develop and grow, we must grow thoughtfully. It's not just about erecting buildings; it's about preserving the heart and soul of our city.

Sustainable growth is at the core of this vision. We need to ensure that environmentally responsible choices are made with all developments. I envision a Ferndale that grows in a way that serves the well-being of our community and our environment today and for generations to come.

Preserving Ferndale's unique identity is equally crucial. Ferndale is special because of its history and character, and we should cherish that. Our historic infrastructure, landmarks and the things that make us who we are as a city deserve protection. Our past is a vital part of our future.

The most important aspect of my approach to development is community involvement. It's not about imposing my plans on Ferndale; it's about listening to the aspirations and needs of our community. From the very beginning of any development project, I believe that your voice should be at the forefront.

In essence, my vision for Ferndale's development is about growing while staying true to our values, preserving our identity, and ensuring that every resident has a say in shaping our future. It's about creating a future that we can all look forward to and be proud of.

What are the ways in which I see Ferndale moving toward racial equity?

Achieving racial equity in Ferndale requires a comprehensive approach. To tackle racial disparities, I will engage community members, particularly marginalized groups, in the decision making process and policy development to ensure diverse perspectives have a seat at the table. We need to have hard conversations about the reality of the situation and what needs to be done. I will use my previous experience in diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and work to build community partnerships that are rooted in diversity. I will support black owned businesses and entrepreneurs that want to start and grow their businesses in Ferndale. I will gather data on racial disparities in areas like education, housing and employment to determine where disparities exist. On council, I will work to strengthen and enforce our anti-discrimination policies as well as encourage and support representation of racial minorities on Ferndale's boards and commissions, and within our police and fire departments.

Working to achieve racial equity will be ongoing. Our collective efforts require a deep commitment to dismantling systemic racism at all levels of government and society in order to work towards racial equity, something that I will always fight for.

What is my position on climate sustainability as it relates to city government?

Climate sustainability is a priority for our community's future. I support implementing policies and green initiatives that promote environmental preservation in Ferndale. I also support initiatives that reflect the struggle that we face with changing climate, such as stormwater mitigation tactics like bioswale installation and remediating places in our parks where soil compaction and makeup create areas that can't be used by residents during flood prone times of the year. I would love to expand green spaces and parks and create more native species habitats around town to protect natural habitats and enhance biodiversity. At the municipal level, investing in sustainable transportation, renewable energy sources and energy efficient buildings is important. We must continue to embrace innovative solutions for a greener, more sustainable Ferndale for our community today and for future generations to come.

What is my position on the financial state of the city, and the Headlee Override?

"The financial state of Ferndale is a topic of great importance. Our current financial state is a reflection of many factors. The fact that the cost of doing business has increased over time, compounded with the lack of state revenue sharing, puts the city in a bind trying to make up the difference in financial revenue. We need funding in order to make critical infrastructure decisions and we need to find funding that can help us do so.

Regarding the Headlee Override, I am in full support of the recent assembly of the citizen task force who will make a recommendation on a ballot initiative on this complex issue. My role as a council member is to support their recommendation within reason. I pledge to carefully consider their findings, weigh the potential benefits and drawbacks of a Headlee Override, and ensure that any decisions made aligns with the best interests of our community. I believe in the power of community input and will prioritize the financial health and stability of Ferndale in every decision I make.

Responsible budgeting is another pillar of my campaign platform. My commitment to responsible budgeting involves identifying areas of over expenditure, exploring cost-saving opportunities, and researching new revenue streams.

What do I think will be my greatest challenge if I am elected to this position, and how do I see myself overcoming it?

Balancing the diverse needs and expectations of Ferndale's residents will likely be my greatest challenge. It's difficult to find a middle ground, but it's a challenge I am fully ready to embrace. To overcome it, I'll uphold one of the pillars of my platform and continue my commitment to transparency and open communication. I'll hold regular Listen, Learn, Lead meetings, giving every resident opportunities to express their concerns and aspirations. It's not just about my agenda; it's ours. It is about ensuring that decisions made at the council level are representative of our entire community.