



Questions for Incumbents
Naples City Council Candidates

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1. About you:

My story begins in 1961, when I was born to a single mother in Indiana who was forced to give me up for adoption at the tender age of five years-old. Fortunately, I was adopted by a loving and devout family who instilled the values of integrity, loyalty, and perseverance. With a solid foundation in these core values, I have built a successful career that has allowed me to contribute to the community, along with my wife of 36 years, my children and grandchildren. We have three generations living in Naples.

I attended Seminole State Colleges and initially worked in the petroleum industry before an industry shift in the 1980's that led me to eventually be recruited into a management and marketing role with 7-Eleven.

In 2008, I was dispatched to southwest Florida to turn around what was an underperforming district. In two years, I revitalized the market in a first-ever transition from corporate-owned stores, to franchise-owned stores. Following the campaign, the 7-Eleven stores, employed more than 1,000 residents and generated \$300 million in annual revenue. The initiative resulted in 7-Eleven rising to the No. 3 spot in Entrepreneur Magazine's 31st Annual Franchise 500 and honoring me with its highest honor: Market Manager of the Year.

During this time, my family and I fell in love with Naples and decided to invest in becoming a full-time resident as well as purchasing and managing numerous 7-Eleven franchises in the region.

2. What attributes, perspectives or skills did you demonstrate during your first term that differentiated you from other members of City Council?

I pride myself on listening to people on all sides of the issues. Our residents need to be heard. I am also a firm believer that once our community identifies priorities, their elected representatives should focus to ensure these priorities are addressed.

3. Describe a time when you led members of City Council to bring about change.

I challenged the Council to reach a consensus on the top priorities for our community. These priorities aligned with the 2019 Vision Assessment. It was important for our community to get these items addressed. I identified these priorities and challenged Council, as well as our City Manager, to bring these matters forward for action.

These priorities included improving water quality (beach outfall pipes, lakes cleanup and improving stormwater codes), revising several codes to reflect the values of the community, removing the 4th Avenue South parking garage project from the regulating plans, adopting revisions to setback rules on Fifth Avenue South, address density issues for D Downtown, re-examine requirements for open space, and more.

The above priorities had been “talked about” for years with little or no action. I challenged the Council and was able to reach a consensus on the priorities. This had a substantial impact on the subsequent work completed on these items. It aligned our city staff with Council priorities. Important matters were addressed. We managed to accomplish much for our community.

4. Was there a City Council vote during your first term in which you disagreed with the outcome? If so, why did you disagree?

Thank you for this question. One matter has consumed my thoughts for years. There was a derelict home that was a nuisance to the neighborhood. Swarms of bees, broken windows and trash were just a few of the problems. Code Enforcement fines were racking up daily to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars. The home was purchased, and the situation was addressed by the new owners. The home improvements turned the property into a community asset rather than a nuisance. The new owners were saddled with the fines from the previous owner and petitioned for a reduction or, elimination of the fines. I was the only vote to eliminate the fine. It seemed to me that this is exactly how we would want such derelict homes to be addressed.

Placing a substantial fine on those doing good for the community just didn't seem right. I deeply regret not being able to influence my peers to see the merits of rewarding the new homeowners for reflecting the values of our community. They were ordered to pay an incredible sum to the city. I felt like I had failed on many levels.

5. What three things do you want to accomplish in a second term on City Council?

1. Champion environmental stewardship by advancing work on long-term water quality and stormwater management.
2. Develop broader citizen engagement along with making the City of Naples as the #1 destination for a career in municipal employment.
3. Continue to refine our codes to ensure responsible redevelopment. Although increased density and intensity will benefit my family by delivering more customers to our stores, I believe it simply isn't the right thing to do for our beloved city.

Please email your responses to Sandy Parker, sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com, no later than December 13, 2021.