



Questions for  
Naples City Council Candidates

Submitted by: Gary Price

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Email: [gary@fifthavenuefamily.com](mailto:gary@fifthavenuefamily.com)

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Phone: 239-367-4500

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1. About you:

- How old are you? 58
- How long have you lived in the City of Naples, and where did you live previously? 25 years in the City of Naples, and 2 years prior in Ocala, Florida.
- What is your educational background and past work experience?

I have a Bachelor's degree from Ohio State University in Real Estate and Urban Analysis. Over the last 20 years, I've dedicated my career to working for the company I co-founded, Fifth Avenue Family Office. In addition to running my business, I have also served on the city council, two years as Vice Mayor and ten years as Councilman. In between serving on council, I have also served eight years on the Planning Advisory Board and seven years as Chairman of the Naples Pension Board.

2. What are your thoughts on the proposed NCH Heart and Stroke Institute and its location on NCH's Downtown Naples campus?

I believe that the Heart and Stroke Institute is critical to our community and should be approved as soon as possible. I think that the way the Mayor and the City Council handled this petition and wasted three years of time is reprehensible. The fact that they heard this in October of '21 and still haven't approved it, is a sign that there is a total lack of leadership, and this project should have already been built or almost completed by now.

3. Do you support the Naples Airport continuing to operate at its current location along Airport-Pulling Road? What are the most important considerations with respect to a potential relocation of the Airport?

I support the Naples Airport continuing to operate in its current location. The most important considerations are the fact that the airport has been there since 1942 and the cost of relocation would be approximately \$1B dollars. The positive economic impact that the airport has had in the city of Naples is almost \$900 million dollars per year. In addition to that, there are environmental issues with moving an 800-acre airport out into land that would potentially cause environmental problems, damaging land that would otherwise be left pristine.

4. What are the most important factors to be considered by City Council as it is asked to approve redevelopment proposals for the 5th Avenue South Extension, Four Corners, and Davis Triangle areas?

The considerations for redevelopment at Four Corners, specifically regarding what will be the Restoration Hardware, are important. It is crucial for us to consider the traffic impact, as well as the density for that intersection, and how we will manage that vacant piece of land being developed fully, including looking at parking. We already have underground parking codes in the Florida Building Code that should guide any projects. The fact that the City Council chose to stop that and create their own local ordinance is not helpful; it is a waste of time and causes unnecessary delays.

5. What are the most important environmental (especially water-related) issues facing the City of Naples? What measures can and should City Council take in the next four years to address them?

The most important environmental issue facing the city of Naples begins with the stormwater outfall project approved in 2019, in which I played a part. Initially a \$30M project, because the current mayor and Council failed to act for the last four years on completing it, it has now escalated to a \$90M project with uncertain viability. We are faced with a stormwater problem concerning both volume and water quality, and this project could have significantly addressed these issues. We must also continue to seek solutions for the significant runoff from Collier County into the Golden Gate Canal, which eventually flows into Naples Bay. Finding a resolution to redirect this water naturally south from the county is crucial to prevent its impact on the Golden Gate Canal and Naples Bay. This runoff has been a major source of water quality problems in our city for many years. Additionally, I believe we need to take a more active role with the South Florida Water Management District, the Everglades Foundation, and their partners concerning Lake Okeechobee and various projects that distinctly affect us, given our downstream position from water contamination in other parts of the state.

6. Some people generally want to limit any new development and keep Naples the way it is. Others are generally opposed to any infringement on property owners' rights. Where do you fall on the continuum between the two?

I have a 20-year track record of voting for development that I believed was in the best interest of the city. I have worked with petitioners to strike a balance between their needs and what I consider the right equilibrium within the city's capacity and in adherence to our code. It is too easy to simply say "no" to development. The more effective approach is to figure out how we can achieve smart growth and maintain redevelopment that aligns with our expectations and high standards.

I would position myself in the middle of the continuum when it comes to balancing new development with property rights. I opposed the ordinance proposed by the City Council weeks after Hurricane Ian, as it would have affected mine and my family's property rights. We lost our home in Hurricane Ian, and the council's discussion on how much we could rebuild on our lot felt poorly timed, in bad taste, and displayed a disconnection from the residents during a time when support was needed. It was a real opportunity for them to lead and provide assistance, but they failed to do so.

7. Was there a City Council vote during the last four years in which you disagreed with the outcome? If so, why did you disagree?

There have been numerous votes over the past four years with which I disagree, primarily due to concerns about the flawed process. I believe decisions have been made that are not in the best interest of the city. One instance that particularly troubled me is the handling of a significant NCH project for the Heart and Stroke Institute. Since October 2021, there have been repeated votes to either pass it onto another meeting or delay it. Although there was a recent vote to support the project, it proposed building a 30 ft parking garage when the hospital had requested 40 ft. This specific vote, among others, highlights my disagreement with the entire flawed process.

8. What three things do you want to accomplish in the next four years?

In my four-year term if elected, my priorities would be as follows:

**Rebuilding the staff:** Over the last two years, our city has lost over 200 employees, a result of broken culture and a lack of leadership. It is imperative to provide the dedicated individuals working for our city with a new path—one of inspiration, support, and respect.

**Providing take-home vehicles for our Police Department:** I aim to renegotiate their complete compensation package, extending beyond salaries, with the goal

of making them the highest paid police and fire personnel in the state of Florida, if not the entire country. Retaining our talented workforce is essential, and take-home vehicles contribute to this effort.

**Reintegrating neighborhood plans into the comprehensive plan:** It is crucial that each neighborhood has a voice in determining its style and expectations. By ensuring this representation, we promote individual identity within the broader city context. This approach identifies opportunities for healing and unity, addressing the divisions that have plagued our community over the past four years. I am committed to being a unifier, a believer in the power of uniting people and rallying behind the common goal of making our city even better.

**Please email your responses to Sandy Parker, [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com), no later than February 2, 2024.**