

MEET THE CANDIDATES

CITY COUNCIL



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE ~ SPECIFIC TO DOWNTOWN ELGIN TOPICS ~

The Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin does not endorse or oppose any candidate. Information gathered through this questionnaire is solely to educate the community by gathering and publishing candidate responses to Downtown Elgin specific questions.

FOR REFERENCE

[Nonprofitvote.org](https://www.nonprofitvote.org) - Permissible Election Activities checklist

IRS Website - [The Restriction of Political Campaign Intervention by Section 501\(c\)\(3\) Tax-Exempt Organizations](#)

MAGGIE BEYER

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

I would love to see a calisthenic park with pull up bars, outdoor fitness equipment and outdoor workout areas for people to work out at. It could be a good physical activity for numerous age groups. Also a skatepark. It should be accessible to all levels, with long runways & a mini ramp, which could include a manual pad.

It would draw the athletic type to the city and also the youth.

We need to offer more things for our youth to do that is positive for their development of their bodies. It would also be a thing that could help our city have a better image.

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local business in Elgin?

Just last night I had two meetings downtown Elgin and wanted to have dinner. I couldn't think of a sit down restaurant. We ended up having dinner at the Gail Borden Library Cafe. I think it is a shame that there is no sit down restaurant that the residents could frequent before performances at the Hemmens or any other event downtown. I know there is Danny's Pizza but I would prefer a quieter atmosphere where you can hear each other speak.

I also think that more advertisements from local businesses would improve their traffic with customers. And we could encourage them to offer specials to attract people to their business. Lastly, more police presence so people feel safe being downtown.

MAGGIE BEYER

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

To put it simply, we could do a survey and ask the residents what they think would make Elgin a better place to live, shop and dine at. Most important would be to enact the results of the survey and let the respondents know that we listened to them. This would help the community feel that they have a say in Elgin.

STEVEN THOREN

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

I feel very strongly about the continued revitalization of Elgin's downtown. It has been on a pathway of improvement for many years but has quite a way to go. The promenade is great and with the market being there it's gaining notoriety. Hoping more events can utilize this fine thoroughfare. The new courtyard is wonderful. The city did an excellent job with that facelift, now let's get some activity there. With the new apartment getting close, additional residents will help the downtown growth. I applaud the restaurants and hope more will come along with some specialty shops. I will work to extend the TIF to help buildings and owners with growth. The more we can do downtown, the more we will be able to get people from the west to come down and experience its lore.

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

As I mentioned above, extending the tif will be very important for growth opportunity. I will support bringing more events to the downtown area. I support the DNA efforts to work with business owners like the trash bins coral and altering the restrictions for tenants to attract a wider range of people and businesses. A collaborative way to engage businesses to work together in promotions and activities will also help.

STEVEN THOREN

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3. How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

The city has been holding open forums for residents to share their feelings and opinions regarding the library area expansion. While we haven't decided on the course of action yet, the same type of meetings for citizens and businesses is encouraged. I think it's important to learn what they want, not what the city wants. We strive for results of positive, more involvement, growth, more stores, restaurants, action, etc. The more people come, the more we can offer. The Nightmare keeps growing and it exposes more businesses every year. That is what we need. I grew up going downtown Elgin on my bike in the 60s. It was a magical place. I know it will never be the same because times have changed, also of note, Elgin's demographic has changed. Elgin is not St. Charles or Geneva, but if we all work together, we can make it a more special place than it is today. I'm all in.

CECILIA IVANA BROOKS

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

NO RESPONSE

DIANA ALFARO

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

Downtowns are economic drivers of communities. My vision for downtown Elgin incorporates community participation to ensure downtown Elgin is our shared vision not only mine. I think, if the community agrees, seek to create downtown as a vibrant and diverse area that serves as both the economic and cultural heart of our city. I can see downtown evolving into a destination where historic architecture blends with modern amenities, attracting visitors while serving residents' daily needs. A healthy mix of local retail, dining options at various price points, arts, professional services, outdoor recreational activities, entertainment, and residential opportunities.

The strength of downtown boosts the overall growth in Elgin. It strengthens our image, makes us a destination for neighboring communities, and increases the overall quality of life for Elgin residents. In addition, it generates significant tax revenue that will fund essential services citywide, creating benefits far beyond the downtown business district. Downtown's success creates powerful ripple effects as visitors who come for unique downtown experiences discover Elgin's other distinctive neighborhoods and attractions. Perhaps most significantly, a thriving downtown builds civic pride that translates into broader community investment, volunteer engagement, and positive word-of-mouth that benefits the entire city.

DIANA ALFARO

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

According to the DNA annual report it stated there are “445 Total Business units operating in downtown Elgin as of January 2023.” These businesses are critical to Elgin’s economic growth.

To support local businesses in downtown Elgin and to strengthen this critical business ecosystem, I would take the following steps:

- Create ‘Local Businesses TA Day’, in which on these days we would have a coalition of business supporting organizations come together to provide at no cost technical assistance to businesses directly in downtown Elgin. These events would offer guidance on accessing funding, optimizing operations, and implementing growth strategies - directly addressing the business turnover concerns highlighted in the Main Street America Transformation Strategy report.
- Develop a streamlined system connecting local businesses to no-cost opportunities they may otherwise miss - including private grant opportunities, tax preparation assistance, bookkeeping tools, and information available storefronts. This proactive approach ensures our local entrepreneurs have every advantage to thrive.
- Launch a targeted campaign to redirect local spending back into downtown. The Elgin Development Group's 2021 Retail Market Analysis revealed \$240 million in resident spending going outside our community. This initiative would highlight unique downtown offerings and demonstrate how local spending strengthens our entire community.
- Partner with social service organizations and city staff to implement compassionate, effective approaches to addressing those confronting homelessness downtown - addressing a key concern identified by survey respondents in the Main Street America report while supporting our most vulnerable residents.

DIANA ALFARO

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

Economic development thrives when it genuinely incorporates community voices. I propose launching a pilot City Economic Development Advisory Group—a diverse coalition bringing together local business owners, workforce development experts, artists, freelancers, nonprofit leaders, representatives from the Elgin Area Chamber, D.N.A., Explore Elgin, Planning and Zoning Commission members, stay-at-home parents, union representatives, and city staff to collaboratively shape our economic future.

This pilot initiative will:

1. Evaluate and strengthen existing city programs, policies, and ordinances
2. Create strategies to increase local spending by both Elgin residents and visitors from neighboring communities
3. Broaden community participation in economic initiatives
4. Identify emerging economic challenges and develop proactive solutions

This inclusive approach harnesses our community's collective expertise and diverse perspectives. While the advisory group will focus on economic development throughout Elgin, it recognizes downtown as a critical economic engine and community hub requiring attention.

Economic development serves as the foundation for everything from infrastructure improvements to job creation and reducing those experiencing homelessness. My plan emphasizes transparency, meaningful community input, and measurable outcomes to ensure Elgin's long-term prosperity benefits all residents.

DUSTIN GOOD

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

Downtown Elgin has the potential to become a vibrant, mixed-use district that honors our historic character while embracing innovation and growth. My vision centers on creating a walkable, accessible downtown that serves as both a destination for visitors and a neighborhood for residents.

I see three key elements driving downtown's future:

First, increasing residential density through adaptive reuse of historic buildings and strategic infill development. During my first term, I supported zoning amendments that reduced minimum apartment size requirements downtown, making housing development more feasible. More residents living downtown means more customers for local businesses and more activity throughout the day and evening.

Second, fostering a diverse business ecosystem that includes retail, dining, arts, entertainment, and professional services. The recently approved downtown zoning modernization, which I proudly supported, makes it easier for small-scale artisans and entrepreneurs to establish businesses downtown by creating new land use categories and streamlining approval processes.

Third, enhancing connectivity between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods through improved transit options, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and bicycle accessibility. Our upcoming Active Mobility Plan, which I voted to fund, will create a comprehensive strategy for better connecting downtown to the rest of Elgin.

Downtown's contribution to our overall growth extends beyond economic development. As our historic core, it represents Elgin's unique identity and serves as our community gathering place. By investing in downtown, we're investing in Elgin's cultural vitality, historic preservation, and sense of community while creating economic opportunities for residents and business owners.

DUSTIN GOOD

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

Supporting downtown businesses requires both immediate actions and long-term strategies. If re-elected,

I will focus on:

1. Continuing to modernize regulations: Building on the zoning amendments I supported this term, I'll push for further regulatory reforms that remove unnecessary barriers to business operation and growth. This includes streamlining permitting processes, reviewing signage regulations, and ensuring our codes support rather than hinder business development.
2. Enhancing financial resources: I'll advocate for grant programs like the Facade Improvement Program and exploring new incentives for businesses making investments downtown. Additionally, I'll support efforts to connect business owners with outside funding sources such as state and federal grants or community development financial institutions.
3. Improving infrastructure: Businesses need reliable infrastructure to thrive. I'll prioritize investments in our downtown streets, sidewalks, lighting, and public spaces while ensuring parking solutions that balance the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.
4. Supporting collaborative marketing: I'll continue working with the Downtown Neighborhood Association and other stakeholders to develop coordinated marketing strategies that promote downtown as a destination. This includes building around signature events like Nightmare on Chicago Street to draw more visitors and residents throughout the month of October.
5. Fostering entrepreneurship: I'll support programs that help aspiring business owners develop skills and access resources needed to launch successfully. This includes exploring partnerships with Elgin Community College and other organizations to provide business education and mentorship opportunities.
6. Enhancing public safety: Ensuring downtown is clean, well-maintained, and safe is essential for business success. I'll continue to support community policing initiatives and infrastructure investments that enhance safety and comfort for everyone downtown, especially during the evening hours. These steps, implemented thoughtfully and collaboratively, will strengthen downtown's business environment and support the entrepreneurial spirit that drives our local economy.

DUSTIN GOOD

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

Meaningful community engagement must be at the heart of decision-making for downtown Elgin. Throughout my first term, I've demonstrated a commitment to inclusive governance, and I'll expand these efforts if re-elected:

1. Digital engagement tools: As demonstrated by my support for the city's newly funded digital engagement platform, I believe in making participation accessible. I'll advocate for using this platform to gather input on downtown initiatives, allowing residents and business owners to contribute ideas even when they can't attend meetings in person.

2. Diverse representation on advisory committees: When forming committees or task forces related to downtown initiatives, I'll push for membership that reflects downtown's diversity, including business owners, residents, property owners, arts organizations, and visitors.

3. Transparent and inclusive communication: If re-elected, I'll work to improve communications, ensuring they reach all community members, with particular emphasis on our Spanish-speaking businesses and residents. While Elgin is a minority-majority community, we haven't always adequately engaged or represented this demographic. I'll advocate for improved communications and culturally responsive outreach that acknowledges our unique identity. Downtown Elgin shouldn't aspire to be Geneva or St. Charles, we should embrace what makes us special: our diverse, vibrant community that has more in common with neighborhoods like Pilsen than with other Fox Valley suburbs.

4. Collaborative accountability: I'll strengthen our relationship with the Downtown Neighborhood Association, which receives city funding to facilitate downtown development, to ensure they're fulfilling their contractual obligation to serve all downtown stakeholders. By reviewing their performance metrics and encouraging more inclusive programming and outreach, I'll push for accountability in how DNA represents downtown interests. As a former DNA board member, I understand both the organization's potential and its current limitations in representing our diverse downtown constituency.

I believe Elgin works best when we work together. By involving diverse stakeholders, we'll develop more creative solutions and build broader support for downtown initiatives, leading to more successful and sustainable outcomes.

ERIK BOSQUE PEÑA

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

"My vision for downtown Elgin is to create a vibrant, inclusive destination that serves as the heart of our community while expanding strategically to the west side. I see downtown Elgin becoming a dynamic hub that attracts visitors from both north and south of the city, encouraging them to explore everything our city has to offer. By developing the west side and strengthening our downtown core, we can create a natural flow that leads people to discover our unique shops, restaurants, and cultural attractions. This expansion will not only enhance our economic growth but also create a more connected and prosperous city for all residents."

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

To support local businesses in Downtown Elgin, I would implement several key initiatives:

1. Enhance the streamlined permit and licensing process to reduce bureaucratic barriers
2. Establish or enhance a business mentorship program connecting experienced entrepreneurs with new business owners
3. Develop a marketing campaign highlighting downtown businesses and west side expansion opportunities
4. Implement or enhance tax incentives for businesses investing in downtown renovation and west side development
5. Enhanced grant program for facade improvements and business modernization
6. Organize regular events and festivals that drive foot traffic to downtown businesses
7. Establish or heavily promote a 'Shop Local' campaign to encourage community support of downtown businesses.

ERIK BOSQUE PEÑA

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

My approach to involving stakeholders would be comprehensive and inclusive:

1. Form or strengthen a Downtown Development Advisory Committee with representatives from businesses, residents, and community organizations
2. Host regular town halls and community forums to gather input on downtown initiatives
3. Create an online platform for continuous feedback and suggestions
4. Establish working groups focused on specific aspects of downtown development
5. Partner with neighborhood associations to ensure residential interests are represented
6. Implement a transparent communication system to keep stakeholders informed of progress and decisions
7. Collaborate with west side community leaders to ensure seamless integration of expansion plans
8. Regular surveys and feedback sessions to measure community satisfaction and gather new ideas.

MARK SMITH

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

I recognize the importance of revitalizing our historic downtown area. The preservation of our architectural heritage is not only a matter of maintaining our community's identity but also plays a fundamental role in fostering economic growth and cultural vibrancy. As part of a comprehensive program aimed at rejuvenating this vital part of our community, I will strive to secure increased grants for property and business owners. These grants will serve as a catalyst for investment, encouraging the restoration and renovation of our historic buildings while also facilitating the development of modern spaces that meet the needs of today's businesses and residents. The revitalization of downtown will be a top priority for my time on council, reflecting a commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all residents. By incentivizing private investment, we can create an environment where both old and new coalesce, providing a unique atmosphere that attracts visitors and residents alike. This initiative will not only preserve the charm of our historic district but also stimulate economic activity, generating jobs and supporting local businesses. Furthermore, the careful integration of contemporary design will ensure that our downtown remains not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing, inviting people to gather and engage within our community. I am committed to a future where our historic downtown thrives as a center of commerce, culture, and community engagement, ensuring its relevance for generations to come.

MARK SMITH

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

To support local businesses downtown, I would propose an increase to the TIF resources available to downtown owners. Expanded incentives and resources from the city will promote current business expansion, as well as drive new businesses to open in the downtown, creating increased revenue for businesses and the city. Transforming our downtown into a destination location is the end goal where together, we can breathe new life into Elgin, strengthening our local economy and fostering a vibrant community where all residents can thrive and enjoy a great quality of life in our beautiful downtown along the Fox River. By enhancing financial support through TIF resources, we not only empower existing enterprises but also attract innovative entrepreneurs who will contribute to our local economy. The resulting growth will not only provide job opportunities but will also improve the overall aesthetic and vibrancy of our downtown area. We envision a place where shopping, dining, and entertainment converge, stimulating community interaction and engagement. By prioritizing our downtown's development, we are investing in the future of Elgin, creating a sustainable environment for generations to come. It is essential that we act now to harness the potential of our downtown, ensuring it remains a cornerstone of our community identity. Collectively, we can transform Elgin into a thriving hub that reflects our shared values and aspirations, making it a desirable destination for both residents and visitors alike.

MARK SMITH

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

I would like to propose the initiation of quarterly townhall forums designed to foster transparency and facilitate open lines of communication between the downtown businesses of Elgin and its residents. These forums will serve as an inclusive platform, where citizens can engage in meaningful dialogue on a wide range of topics without the constraints often experienced during conventional Council meetings, particularly the restrictive three-minute speaking limit. It is my belief that providing residents with the opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions will not only make them feel valued and heard but will also cultivate a sense of community and shared responsibility. By prioritizing citizen engagement, we can address pressing issues that impact the downtown area more effectively and collaboratively. Moreover, these townhall meetings would allow local businesses to voice their perspectives and contribute to discussions that are pertinent to our community's collective well-being. The interactive nature of these forums will encourage feedback and insights from all participants, enriching the decision-making process and enhancing our initiatives to better serve the interests of Elgin. I am confident that establishing these quarterly townhall-type forums will significantly improve the collaboration between residents and businesses, ultimately fostering a stronger, more vibrant Elgin. Thank you for considering this proposal, and I look forward to your support in bringing this vision to fruition.

COREY D. DIXON

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

1.) What is your vision for the future of downtown Elgin, and how do you see it contributing to the overall growth of the city?

I believe in our community's ability to make Downtown Elgin the premier destination in Illinois for living, dining, shopping and doing business. I am committed to providing an environment where businesses, residents, and visitors all feel welcomed and supported.

To that end, over my eight years in service on City Council, I've actively worked to set the stage for exciting entertainment options.

I believe that Downtown Elgin has what it takes to be a booming hub of activity - from family fun activities to cultural events and nightlife. I'm determined to make Downtown Elgin one of the most attractive places in Illinois for companies of every size, including start-ups looking for an affordable place to launch their businesses and ultimately create more jobs for our residents.

This is my vision and my actions on City Council have always supported these goals.

2.) What specific steps would you take to support local businesses in downtown Elgin?

There's a few things.

- 1) I want to make sure that businesses are supported by city staff, the community as a whole and DNA.
- 2) I want to make sure that businesses are not being restricted by outdated ordinances and policies that served a different era and usher in new ones that invites the kind of destination environment that we want.
- 3) Create a small business grant fund.

COREY D. DIXON

COUNCIL CANDIDATE

3.) How would you involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in decisions impacting downtown Elgin?

To start, I would encourage all of those groups to sign up to receive weekly/monthly DNA emails. I would also encourage those same groups to attend/watch their City Council meetings. Those two things are foundational. From there I would like to establish quarterly town halls in partnership with DNA that are hosted in various businesses downtown and speak with these groups directly to hear their thoughts and what they want.



City of Elgin

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(Term of 4 years)

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