

LWV 2017 City Council Voter Guide

City Council, 1st District

Biographical Info:

Name: Rebecca Parr

Mailing Address: 4315 Immanuel St Knoxville, TN 37920

Campaign Phone: (865) 566-1653

Website: <http://www.voterebeccaparr.com>

Name: Stephanie Welch

Mailing Address: 2137 Hillsboro Hts Knoxville, TENNESSEE 37920

Campaign Phone: (865) 368-5307

Website: <http://www.vote4welch.com>

Questions:

Q: *The city has embarked on an ambitious two-year project to overhaul our local zoning code. What changes would you like to see? What parts of the existing code should be retained?*

Rebecca Parr: I would like to see a restructuring of our codes to reflect the changing times our city is experiencing. I would like to see more opportunity for multiple use spaces become available for inclusive housing and development that serve all of our people greater access to amenities and healthier lifestyle. The multiple use spaces can be used for affordable housing, homegrown business, community gardens, and overall integration within existing areas of our city. I would like to see the zoning a better reflection of equitable distribution for business and housing with an emphasis on preserving our wild spaces while still staying focused on the welfare of the people and our neighborhoods. I think there should be very thoughtful planning and decision making in the future layout for infrastructure possibilities and how those will effect the overall plan for our cities in regards to existing communities.

Stephanie Welch: Community preferences have changed since Knoxville's zoning ordinance was adopted nearly 60 years ago. The current ordinance has been heavily amended and favors a suburban, separated development pattern. Complex variance requests and interpretation of the outdated code is often needed to meet growing demand for walkable and mixed-use development. The new code must provide simple, clear land use standards to promote efficiency of public resources, continued private sector investment, and improved clarity for property owners and neighborhoods. The ordinance must also retain the character of existing neighborhoods and business districts that we value while promoting more diverse development, including mixed uses and connections to support multiple transportation modes. I serve on the 20-member advisory committee for Recode Knoxville, and I'm pleased by the many opportunities for our community to have a voice in the process as the final product will shape Knoxville for years to come.

Q: *What do you think the vision and objectives of the present council and administration have been? How would you like to build upon or change that direction?*

Rebecca Parr: The vision for the city has been downtown development and greater use of our outdoor spaces. This development has spread to areas outside of the downtown. I feel that our planning and strategies for sprawl and improvements has not taken into full account the impact on existing communities and families and has caused a decline in affordable housing. My concern is that we need to include everyone in the decision making and that a fairer distribution of money, if not a greater portion of spending, should have the needs and focus on people before parks, expansion, and continued development. We also need to have a greater focus on what is taking place in our neighborhoods and with our families regarding the opioid epidemic. This issue is effecting the lives and well being for all of our futures . Intervention and decriminalization of addiction, and long term solutions for recovery should be a primary focus for everyone.

Stephanie Welch: In an era marked by political divisiveness, it's notable that our city leaders have worked well together on shared priorities. New council members must build on this respect and professionalism, which has helped move us forward as an economically vibrant, environmentally sustainable city with strong neighborhoods radiating from a thriving downtown. I have had the opportunity to support this momentum and establish positive relationships

by serving on city-appointed committees and engaging in community processes, and I support current priorities such as the Urban Wilderness, corridor redevelopment, and strong city services. Knoxville's success has also created new priorities. As demand for urban living grows, there is a growing need for diverse housing options for residents of different ages and income levels. Although the city doesn't directly manage schools, engaging with schools is also a priority as education directly affects prosperity, crime, safety and the health of our community.

Q: *Please provide examples of how you have served the community in the past five years and how you think those efforts have prepared you to serve on city council.*

Rebecca Parr: 2013-Current; Marble City Opera Board 2013-Current; Head Start Policy Council, Chairperson. 2013-Current; Community Action Committee Board Member 2017 Class; Community Action Leadership 2017; CEO's for Cities Conference Greenville SC 2017; Tennessee Action Committee Conference, Chattanooga TN

Stephanie Welch: I have been actively involved for many years to help make Knoxville a great place to live, work, play and learn. Within the past five years, I've served on the Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council, chaired Knoxville's Better Building Board, and served as a Chancellor's Associate at the University of Tennessee. I currently serve on boards for Ijams Nature Center, Leadership Knoxville and the YMCA. I also serve as a 17-year veteran and Officer in the United States Army Reserve. Through my current work at the nonprofit Great Schools Partnership, I oversee several programs that bring resources to public schools and families to support student success, and I have helped expand Knoxville's community schools initiative to 15 sites. I am committed to this service because I love Knoxville, and feel that my experience, leadership skills and the positive relationships I've formed over years of active engagement in our community will be an asset to the First District and the city as a whole.

City Council, 2nd District

Biographical Info:

Name: Wayne Christensen

Mailing Address: 1024 Scenic Dr. Knoxville, TN 37919

Campaign Phone: (865) 300-1396

Website: <http://christensenforcitycouncil.com>

Name: Andrew Roberto

Mailing Address: 9700 Westland Drive Suite 103 Knoxville, TN 37922

Campaign Phone: (865) 406-4012

Website: <http://www.ElectRoberto.com>

Questions:

Q: *The city has embarked on an ambitious two-year project to overhaul our local zoning code. What changes would you like to see? What parts of the existing code should be retained?*

Wayne Christensen: The overhaul of our local zoning code should result in a code that's simple, understandable, and enforceable. Much has changed since the 1950's since the last update. For example, efforts to create the first Bearden Mixed Use Plan resulted in an overly complicated and unworkable multi-page document. The revised plan was a one-page easily understandable one. This experience points the way for the overhaul to resemble the revised Bearden Mixed Use Plan. The updated zoning code should focus on mixed use housing for two large parcels of land in Bearden, Western Plaza and the Homberg Dr. area. There are folks in the neighborhoods around Bearden who are looking to move into smaller housing units after living for decades in large residences, for instance. It's important the process include considerable community support and the analysis of experts to surface the issues that the new zoning code should address, whether they result in mandating sidewalks or building on narrower-than-normal lots.

Andrew Roberto: The basic structure of our code was drafted in the 1960s and its 44 zones are confusing and outdated. By modernizing our zoning code, we can foster growth by building in simplicity, clarity of use, and the stability necessary to encourage investment and strengthen our neighborhoods. Specifically, I want to address mixed-use as an option in higher density areas and use this update to encourage positive development and more walkable and bike friendly spaces. By modernizing our code with interpretability and enforceability in mind we can encourage positive investment. Residential zones including R1 and R1E need to be retained to protect the overall integrity of our neighborhoods. Our homes are typically our single biggest investment and we must preserve the stability these zones

offer. The character of our historic neighborhoods designated with an H1 historic overlay and NC1 neighborhood conservation districts must also be preserved to protect the unique and historic nature of Knoxville.

Q: *What do you think the vision and objectives of the present council and administration have been? How would you like to build upon or change that direction?*

Wayne Christensen: "Mayor Rogero is dedicated to promoting a vibrant local economy, strong neighborhoods, a high quality of life, a thriving downtown and a greener Knoxville. She believes Knoxville's strength comes from the diversity of its people and the beauty of its natural resources," according to the City's web site. She and the Council have focused on building infrastructure to set the stage for a growing, vibrant economy. The Cumberland streetscape is an excellent example of how a city investment can stimulate economic development. Also, the PILOTs and TIFs used downtown to jumpstart development of long-vacant lots or hard-to-redevelop buildings or to keep Regal Entertainment Group in Knoxville have all been wise investments. Importantly, neighborhoods have been stabilized and others protected, both of which should be continued. And, should I be elected, my primary goal would be to continue the significant growth of the past five years without sacrificing any quality of life here in our City.

Andrew Roberto: The success we have seen has come from balancing the interests of economic growth while protecting our neighborhoods and quality of life. Over the past 15 years we have seen 51 properties with a beginning assessed value of \$50 million transform through private investment to a projected assessed value of a half a billion dollars. Without the city writing a check, this accomplishment continues to drive positive investment today. We need to continue to build upon this progress by utilizing our zoning update and bringing the focus to higher density zones and along our corridors to encourage positive private investment. This is imperative as we can anticipate that our fixed costs will rise at 3 percent annually over the next decade, while our largest source of revenue grows at only about 1 percent. My focus is on growing the economy to meet that gap by leveraging our unique position with regional economic partners like Oak Ridge National Lab, UT, and TVA to continue to grow our economy.

Q: *Please provide examples of how you have served the community in the past five years and how you think those efforts have prepared you to serve on city council.*

Wayne Christensen: I have been serving the community for the past 20 years as executive director of Knox Youth Sports at Lakeshore Park. Some 2,000 children ages 3-14 came through the program each year. The position required supervising a large budget, staff, facilities, and hundreds of volunteers in numerous sports year round. Perhaps most important of all, I had to work with countless parents, as coaches or customers, all with differing ideas about youth sports, which surely is not unlike working with various constituencies in the 2nd District and across the City. The position also required setting a vision for the organization, working with a board of directors, and raising considerable funds each year, all of which is also not unlike working with neighborhood organizations, often with differing ideas, in our various communities.

Andrew Roberto: As a Knoxville native, through my experiences in community service, public service, and as a small business owner; I have a unique perspective to bring to city council. I am deeply invested in Knoxville, I'm raising my two daughters here and my experience demonstrates my ability to work with others in building a consensus around an issue and implementing a plan for ultimate success. Over the past 5 years, I have served our community as a Knox County Election Commissioner (2015-2017); member of The Salvation Army's advisory board since 2012 and have served as chairman since 2015; Executive Committee member of the 2014 Knoxville Medal of Honor Convention; member of Sertoma Center Board since 2016, member of Tennessee Veterans Business Association where I founded INVEST a business plan competition for local veterans from 2012-2015; Celebrate Recovery North (2014-2016) volunteer and meal sponsor; Epilepsy Foundation volunteer and bike helmet sponsor at local public schools.

City Council, 3rd District

Biographical Info:

Name: James Edward Corcoran

Mailing Address: 717 N. Central St Knoxville, TN 37917

Campaign Phone: (865) 406-0375

Website: <http://www.corcoranforcouncil.com>

Name: Seema Singh Perez

Mailing Address: 922 Francis Circle Knoxville, TN 37909

Campaign Phone: (865) 368-8391

Website: <http://Facebook @3rddistrict>

Questions:

Q: *The city has embarked on an ambitious two-year project to overhaul our local zoning code. What changes would you like to see? What parts of the existing code should be retained?*

James Edward Corcoran: Many people in the current administration have made a big deal about the zoning code going 50 years without being re-done. However, real estate property law traditionally changes very slowly due to the need for predictability. In short, when someone buys a house, their biggest single investment, they want to know that the neighborhood they buy into is the same type of neighborhood they will live in. However, our established low-density neighborhoods in District 3 should be left alone. We could increase density in some blighted areas near the city core, but the suburban areas outside of downtown should remain traditional residential areas. I would like to reduce unnecessary restrictions that interfere with business owners deciding what to do with their own property, like excessive parking requirements and limits on on-site advertising in commercial corridors. We could expand to mixed uses in commercial corridors.

Seema Singh Perez: The current Knoxville zoning codes are not necessarily flawed but they are outdated. The new zoning codes look to address changes in our economy, transportation concerns, sustainability and how people want to live their lives. Knoxville had a population which had moved from central areas to the suburbs and zoning had responded to those needs. We have seen that trend reverse. Many are content with their neighborhood as is and new coding should not change that. New code should address unique needs in specific neighborhoods versus a blanket approach to code. There is a growing number of people that want to live in communities that are walkable to work and entertainment. New code with mixed use development will make that possible. Our economy is changing, small local businesses are using space in innovative ways that new zoning code needs to encourage and foster.

Q: *What do you think the vision and objectives of the present council and administration have been? How would you like to build upon or change that direction?*

James Edward Corcoran: The present City government has been focused on revitalizing downtown, by subsidizing high dollar housing at the city's center. These TIFs and PILOTS served a necessary purpose, but now we need to let downtown carry its own weight. Our corridors along Western Ave., Broadway, Chapman Highway, and Magnolia Avenue have suffered while we focused on downtown. I also believe that the City has unfortunately been in denial about the seriousness of the drug and gang problems in the city. Our leadership ignored the pill mills that got us into this mess. Also, our budget has outpaced our revenue increases, which is a trend that should make the city worried about another tax increase. I believe we need to get out of the way of our developers and stop "robbing Peter to pay Paul" by encouraging downtown development at the expense of the rest of the city. We also need to make our sidewalks and greenways safe, by increasing our law enforcement spending before increasing our greenway budget.

Seema Singh Perez: I have seen the Mayor and the present City Council make a concerted effort to work together respectfully. There are differing points of view and those should continue to be reviewed and discussed without contention. The city has been making strides towards a more green city, ie the Urban Wilderness and 50+ miles of greenways. Downtown has been developed into an area for festivals, businesses and residences, I support the positive work that the city council and Mayor Rogero have accomplished. I would want to build on all those approaches. I want to continue the standard of living for those who are doing well but also serve the needs of those struggling; those who require jobs with livable wages and workforce housing so that our children and neighbors will be able to afford to stay in Knoxville with a decent quality of life.

Q: *Please provide examples of how you have served the community in the past five years and how you think those efforts have prepared you to serve on city council.*

James Edward Corcoran: An overwhelming majority of my law practice has been providing legal services to poor families and children in foster care. I have been on the front lines fighting drug addiction, as it has made me painfully aware of our inadequate response to the drug problem. I have represented children involved in the worst that Knoxville has to offer, but I have also seen how the best of us can respond to improve those kids' lives. I have spent my career representing the literal "Little Guy" and I believe that has prepared me to represent the people of Knoxville, rather than special interest groups. I also serve on the Board of Zoning Appeals for the County, which gives me the perspective to see how our existing zoning regulations can cause hardship on people wanting to create businesses and homes in Knox County. It's necessary experience for evaluating the upcoming zoning changes.

Seema Singh Perez: For five years I have been involved in a variety of social justice work. I think in order for a city council to be most effective for all its constituents, it needs citizens from a variety of disciplines and experiences such as business, lawyers and real estate agents etc. We need members that have had experience in the political realm and

have served the city for years on various advisory boards. I feel we have no shortage of these types. An aspect that often gets forgotten is a person that is well versed in social justice work, someone who can see certain advantages or disadvantages that a decision may have to underrepresented constituencies.

City Council, 4th District

Biographical Info:

Name: Amelia (Amy) Parker

Mailing Address: 3306 Fairway Road Knoxville, TN 37917

Campaign Phone: (865) 851-8561

Website: <http://VoteAmeliaParker.com>

Name: Lauren Rider

Mailing Address: 229 E. Scott Ave Knoxville, TN 37917

Campaign Phone: (865) 964-3905

Website: <http://www.votelaurenrider.com>

Name: Harry Tindell

Mailing Address: PO Box 27325 Knoxville, TN 37927

Campaign Phone: (865) 524-7200

Website: <http://HarryTindellForKnoxville.com>

Questions:

Q: *The city has embarked on an ambitious two-year project to overhaul our local zoning code. What changes would you like to see? What parts of the existing code should be retained?*

Amelia (Amy) Parker: In speaking with residents around the 4th district, some were excited by opportunities the changing code presented while others were concerned. We must ensure throughout this process that the needs and wants of local neighborhood residents, assessed through meaningful public input, guide this process. This is an opportunity to impact how Knoxville develops over the next 30+ years. When considering incentives, we should prioritize investors and entrepreneurs who invest in our goals such as local job creation, walkability, and reducing carbon emissions. It is an opportunity for us to encourage future developments that will help to eliminate food and health deserts that require whole neighborhoods to travel across town for basic necessities. It is an opportunity to develop code that supports affordable housing expansion; and code that helps facilitate the provision of amenities throughout the city with access by foot, bike, public transit, and less often by car. A healthier Knoxville.

Lauren Rider: Working on zoning with businesses and neighborhoods for the last 12 years, I've seen a "One Size Does Not Fit All" problem with current land use rules that mandates a live here, drive to work, and shop in between pattern. For 50 years we've relied on zoning by variance to force the code to work. The overhaul should add flexibility, remove outdated language, and allow for more walkable neighborhoods, connections to commercial centers, and live/work/play options. Many neighbors want to stay in their suburban, residential neighborhoods but want pedestrian-friendly access to shopping districts with a pharmacy, grocery store, sandwich shop, etc.; our current code does not easily allow for such uses. New projects often are not initiated or are abandoned because they can't fit the code, and older buildings can't be made to fit current regulations. Redevelopment should take advantage of our existing infrastructure and building stock. Zoning can foster smart growth rather than act as a hurdle.

Harry Tindell: I support simplification of the current code while adding flexibility to the new code. The concept of multi-use zoning in our commercial corridors is worth pursuing. Any changes should enhance the status of our many diverse and unique residential neighborhoods and business districts.

Q: *What do you think the vision and objectives of the present council and administration have been? How would you like to build upon or change that direction?*

Amelia (Amy) Parker: The objectives of the current council and administration have largely been focused on redevelopment efforts in downtown and along the four corridors leading into the city as well as making Knoxville a greener, biker-friendly, more energy-efficient, and walkable city. I would like to build upon the city's efforts to reduce Knoxville's carbon emissions by improving access to public transit in the city to increase the number of users but also to reduce the commute times of residents who already rely on the bus. To stop gentrification, however, we must change course on the city's efforts to expand out from the city and instead direct those dollars toward economic

centers in each corner of the city that strengthen neighborhoods from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. Such development can lead to gentrification and in fact, in many ways already has. Ultimately, the future direction of the administration and next council must be guided by the meaningful input of our residents.

Lauren Rider: Downtown is an economic hub due to infrastructure improvements that spurred private investment. Land repurposing added properties to the tax rolls, creating city revenue and jobs. Our economy is built of smaller businesses and we can foster small business startups by tackling blight/abandoned properties. I will build upon a strong city center to address business corridor and neighborhood needs and will: Foster corridor revitalization by tackling barriers that stall redevelopment; Budget to spur economic development, provide quality city services, and generate additional property tax from new development that creates jobs and increases housing options; Address traffic concerns that impact quality of life through modernized traffic signals, improving public transit, and linking existing greenways and bike lanes; Consider housing needs for all income levels, especially lower- middle-income, as housing is essential to the city's stability and ability to attract and keep businesses.

Harry Tindell: The current city government works in two main areas, neighborhood services and community enhancement. The annual city budget and the zoning code are the two primary vehicles by which these priorities are established. With term limits, we will install a new government over the coming months. I believe that the new members of the city government should work to complete the existing agenda and work with the community to create a new agenda for the future. That agenda would include smart growth, development, and redevelopment, that results in sustainable growth, strong and safe neighborhoods, recreational choices, affordable housing options, business opportunities, jobs, and stable taxes.

Q: *Please provide examples of how you have served the community in the past five years and how you think those efforts have prepared you to serve on city council.*

Amelia (Amy) Parker: Over the past 5 years, engagement in my community has helped prepare me to serve on city council. I've served as the treasurer of the Birdhouse Community Center in 4th and Gill. I have also been involved in the work to end disparities in our public schools through my work with Stop School Pushout, Black Lives Matter Knoxville, the Knox County Discipline Committee, and the Cultural Competency RFP Committee. As executive director of SOCM, I helped bring a people-powered radio station to the Knoxville community, WOZO radio 103.9 FM, housed at the Birdhouse and I was also involved in early efforts to promote a city-wide weatherization initiative to address high utility bills & reduce carbon emissions. After SOCM, I became director of Peace Brigades International-USA, through which I've partnered with local groups to bring human rights advocates for dialogue, training, and skill sharing. I helped form the City Council Movement to both be and support people-centered leadership in Knoxville.

Lauren Rider: The best prepared council member is one who has been engaged in the community and is an active listener. I've been a dedicated advocate in the community for the past 12 years and have used that time to interact with and learn city government. I represent my community at City Council, County Commission, MPC, BZA, and BBB meetings. I have engaged in efforts over the past 18 months to rewrite the zoning code and have attended all council meetings, workshops, and public input sessions on mixed-use zoning, Recode Knoxville, and Parking Ordinance revisions. I contributed to revitalization by organizing neighbors and returning blighted and vacant properties to the tax rolls. My involvement over the past 5 years includes: Broadway Corridor Task Force co-chair and founding member; City of Knoxville Neighborhood Advisory Council member; First Creek Greenway improvement leader; CoK Public Property Naming Committee member; Old North Knoxville neighborhood president and board member.

Harry Tindell: I will bring a life-time of service and experience to the community and our state as a member of the Knoxville City Council. I am the only candidate in any district with experience in elected government. With a new majority being elected to city council, my experience, knowledge and relationships will enable me to hit the ground running and to continue the improvements that make Knoxville such an attractive place to live, work and visit.

City Council, 6th District

Biographical Info:

Name: Gwen McKenzie

Mailing Address: 411 Carta Rd Knoxville, TN 37914

Campaign Phone: (865) 524-1458

Website: <http://www.voteqwemckenzie.com>

Name: Jennifer Montgomery

Mailing Address: 2106 Washington Avenue Knoxville, Tennessee 37917-6952

Campaign Phone: (865) 406-4364

Website: <http://www.votejmo.com>

Questions:

Q: *The city has embarked on an ambitious two-year project to overhaul our local zoning code. What changes would you like to see? What parts of the existing code should be retained?*

Gwen McKenzie: I would like to see emphasis on sustainable solutions to assist any residents in historical zoning code areas who may be in jeopardy of being displaced.

Jennifer Montgomery: The current zoning code is over fifty years old and based on development patterns that are more applicable to automobile transportation. The new zoning code will hopefully promote mixed-use development, compatible commercial and residential development together. This kind of zoning is much more suitable to older neighborhoods and districts with infrastructure that is historically based on public transportation and walking and riding alternative modes to automobiles. Much of the Sixth district is composed of older neighborhoods. I am especially interested in opportunities with light manufacturing work in the context of residential and other commercial development. The new zoning should be adaptable to different historic and future neighborhood and district styles as well.

Q: *What do you think the vision and objectives of the present council and administration have been? How would you like to build upon or change that direction?*

Gwen McKenzie: I think the current council vision has been on greenways, connectivity and economic development and growth across the city. I would like to shift the current direction slightly to evaluate and focus on the areas across our city (specifically in the 6th District) that have been underserved in terms of economic development growth in comparison to all projects scheduled within the next 4 years.

Jennifer Montgomery: The vision and objectives of the current council and administration has been smart and sustainable growth. Much recent focus has been on downtown as commercial and residential trends have shifted, here as well as on a national level. Focus on redevelopment of the city neighborhoods and commercial districts has started to spread, from the West and North sides of town to the South and East sides. The focus has also been on changes in more suburban land-use patterns as well. I have a Master of Science in Urban Regional Planning and own a real estate company. I'd like to be part of the continued conversation and effort with regard to smart and sustainable growth. As a representative of the Sixth District. I'd like to extend redevelopment districts along the commercial corridors, like Sutherland Avenue and E. Magnolia Avenue into the Burlington District. I'd like to offer developer incentives, like we have downtown, but for affordable and workforce housing.

Q: *Please provide examples of how you have served the community in the past five years and how you think those efforts have prepared you to serve on city council.*

Gwen McKenzie: My volunteerism spans 20 years with various organizations however within the past 5 years I have focused my efforts on working with the Knoxville Area Urban League National Achiever's Program and caring for a parent. Working with young people who are striving for academic excellence, higher education opportunities and giving back through community service projects has been very rewarding. This experience has equipped me for city council by realizing the great need to encourage and expose young people to current issues in local/state government and becoming actively engaged in the political process.

Jennifer Montgomery: Over the last five years, I have been working in the community to build a business based on the mentorship of people in the community that want to serve as trusted advisors about housing opportunities. My business is located in the Sixth District, where I spent a great deal of my career acting in just about every neighborhood around the Sixth District as this kind of advisor. I have learned a great deal about the hopes, dreams, and necessities of people in the neighborhoods where I've been working. I have also been active in my neighborhood group. I am now serving as President. I have had the experience of facilitating and providing support for difficult conversations that have led to greater participation and dialogue over the last year. My term ends at the end of this year. I am looking forward to bringing my experience to the recently formed Lion's Club in East Knoxville and a merchant's group that I started, Magnolia Avenue Market Area (MAMA), a few years ago.