

Charlotte City Council – District 1 2009 Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Owen Sutkowski

Phone Number: 704-840-8025

Email Address: osutkowski@yahoo.com

What is the number one issue facing our community and how do you plan to address it?

I feel that public safety is the number one issue facing our community. Making sure that people are safe and feel safe in their homes and communities will impacts many other areas of Charlotte, ranging from economic development to transportation. I plan to address this issue with a strategy that works with the District Attorney and the county to create a system which closes the “revolving door” for criminals and address the public safety issues as a whole, not only the symptoms.

I will advocate for research into alternatives to incarceration such as requiring certain non-violent offenders to gain employment or finish a GED or vocational school. Increasing resources and working for proactive solutions will help combat the dozens of gangs in Charlotte. Reaching out to communities in new ways to break down neighborhood barriers, and new comer vs. native disparities, will also help in the area of public safety.

Do you support a transfer tax or impact fee on real estate? Please explain your answer.

While I do not support a city council mandated transfer tax, I do support allowing the people of the City of Charlotte (many of whom are property owners themselves) to vote on the issue in a referendum. This issue will directly affect many areas of the community and giving the final say to voters will work to give them a voice on the issue.

I recognize the current economic situation when looking at impact fees. Currently, I believe that real estate markets will be harmed due to fees (such an impact fee) which would negatively impact the increasing pace of new estate development. Therefore, I will not support it.

How do you propose to keep housing affordable in our community?

I believe there are several ways to keep housing affordable in Charlotte. First, it is important to review current city policies for planning, zoning and code enforcement to make sure the related processes are streamlined and efficient. Excess cost and time in those processes could potentially trickle down to home buyers. I also feel that working collaboratively with citizens, real estate development and city entities towards practical ideas to keep housing affordable is vital to achieve long term solutions.

Inclusionary housing policies, voluntary and mandatory, have been suggested for developing additional affordable housing in our community. Do you support any type of inclusionary housing policies? Please explain your answer.

I support a voluntary inclusionary housing policy. The economic gentrification throughout many neighborhoods in Charlotte is apparent and I believe this is one way to address this issue. I also believe this offers an opportunity for addressing the insular nature of affordable housing units which currently exist. Inclusionary housing offers a melting pot opportunity for the community in

which it is placed. Keeping it on a voluntary basis means that neighborhoods with high levels of affordable housing do not continue to be over-saturated with more affordable housing.

Do you support a fee-based rental registration program for all rental units throughout the city of Charlotte? Please explain your answer.

In these tough economic times, I do not believe adding an additional fee to owners of rental units will be helpful. Adding additional fees will potentially get passed down to the tenant and many are already struggling to pay their rent. Therefore, I do not support a fee-based system.

Paying for roads is a community responsibility. How do you plan to address prioritizing and funding the road construction and maintenance needs of Charlotte?

When looking at the prioritizing of infrastructure planning in Charlotte, several aspects are important to address. First, I believe in working collaboratively with neighborhoods, small businesses, and the planning commission to walk the communities and see where the most current needs are (as compared with the current plans). Second, the city of Charlotte is consistently behind in keeping roads and sidewalks up to par, while putting in place new sidewalk projects residents have lobbied against. We must stop this "sidewalks to nowhere" program and make sure that we are keeping our current sidewalks and roads up to par before we make expansive plans for new roads and sidewalks.