



City of Denton
City Council
Candidate Questionnaire
2017 - Responses

DISTRICT 1:

Respondent: Gerard Hudspeth

Website: www.gerardfordenton.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

The three most pressing issues facing the city are tax rate, infrastructure and ethics ordinance.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

The top three economic development opportunities are entertainment complex (similar to Dave & Busters), a minor league sports team and marketing to those traveling to the casino in Oklahoma.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

The largest obstacles to real property are the city permitting process, lack of transparency in fee structure and lack of communication between all parties (citizens, staff, professionals). All can be address with a customer service department, comment line and same day appellate process.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

I'm in favor of public incentives, to further support our citizens needs. I would advocate for a meritocracy component. The hope of high paying jobs is not enough for me to authorize and guarantee incentives.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

Regardless of the property tax freeze vote results, I will focus on needs versus wants. The city of Denton needs to address spending and only want

Respondent: Emily White

Website: www.emilyforeveryone.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

Homelessness in Denton has risen dramatically in the last year. Also, construction in alignment with access to local business remains a growing concern. Finally, encouraging alternative means of transportation by adding bike and walk lanes in Denton remains a priority.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

Denton should focus on making sure that small businesses are able to thrive in Denton--this means supporting the Denton Community Market. Denton should also make sure we can get our return on the convention center by attracting visitors to the convention center. Finally, more employee-owned business to promote wage equality.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

Code enforcement seems to be a hassle; we need a simple template to enforce code in Denton. Zoning issues continue to offer challenges; we need to make sure we are maintaining balance between commercial properties and residential areas of Denton.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

Absolutely. I would be in favor of attracting a quality business in Denton for multiple employment opportunities. I would recommend employee-owned businesses to promote wage equality in Denton.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

I would work to make sure our roads, parks, libraries, lights, and streets, could receive the maintenance they need as a result of losing revenue from the freeze.

DISTRICT 3:

Respondent: Jason Cole

Website: www.coleforcouncil.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

1. Explosive Growth- By 2050, Denton County is projected to have a population of 3 million and the City of Denton is projected to have a population of 500,000.
2. Lack of sufficient infrastructure to handle the growth.
3. Denton's code and permitting process is difficult to navigate.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

1. Commercial growth- Commercial growth brings in additional revenue without additional stress on our roads and schools.
2. Bring higher paying jobs to Denton through incentives.
3. Help shepherd our startup small businesses through Denton's complicated code and permitting processes.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

The largest obstacles to real property development in Denton are overburdensome codes and permits. One example would be our tree ordinance. Another would be Denton's long permit wait times compared to other cities of our size. We must reduce the time it takes for a business to get a c/o.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

I am for public incentives to recruit quality businesses because it is a very competitive process. We are competing against other cities for these good companies. These higher paying jobs are key for our economic growth. Higher paying jobs bring in more economic activity which increases revenue.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

The best way to deal with revenue shortfalls is to increase economic growth. Increased economic activity increases revenue. Increased taxes is the wrong way to go because it leads to lethargic economic growth. Denton needs make it easier for startup businesses to open in a timely and affordable manner.

Respondent: Donald Duff

Website:

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

Infrastructure. Road repairs are behind schedule. Hoping new City Manager can get the city back on track. Bad roads turn away new business looking to come to Denton. Lack of consistency in planning. Rising property taxes. To attract new business and people, you have to keep property taxes in check.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

I-35 Corridor – west of the city.

Airport.

Downtown

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

Lack of consistency in planning. Denton is growing with “shot gun” approach. We need a solid comprehensive plan for growth. The city’s Planning Dept. is under new leadership. Also, the Planning Dept. is working on a new Development Code for the city. The one we have is 30 years old.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

Only when business meets specific criteria: How many jobs? Average salary? Will act as a magnet for other quality businesses? What is the definition of “quality business?” How much is the incentive and how long will the city have to give up its collection of property taxes and sales taxes?

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

Short fall is \$200-\$400K out of a \$114 million budget. Average price of 154 new homes built in Robson 2016 is \$432K. If we were over 65 (they are not), then Exactly \$452K new revenue will be added to City. Robson will build 150 per year for 25 years.

Respondent: Paul Meltzer

Website: www.allinforpaul.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

Managing growth so Denton becomes better, not just bigger. Developing constructive, innovative approaches to mitigate our poor air quality. Achieving fiscal discipline in city government to keep property taxes in check and reduce the pressure to seek generic development driven solely by tax base concerns rather than quality of life.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

We should be building on our strengths in arts and education. So high tech, cultural destinations, and innovations in sustainability. But our policy is lopsided toward chasing large entities when most job growth comes from small business. Cultural destinations should include distinctive new districts that are walkable from the square.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

Some obstacles are actually good for preserving Denton's character and property values--like historic district overlays and tree ordinances. But there's obsolete zoning in some areas like Cement City, burdensome red tape, and requirements that are not right-scaled for small business. Reviewing all the detail takes intelligence and stamina from council.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

Sparingly because Denton is already an attractive proposition. We should be weighing incentive-seekers on whether they would make Denton better, not just bigger, helping advance community goals in distinctiveness and sustainability.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

We need large organization leadership experience on council to provide oversight to a limited restructuring. The goal would be to trim administrative overheads and, where possible, shift funds to citizen-facing services. We also need to tap department managers' expertise in what 5 percent of their budgets is most cuttable.

DISTRICT 4:

Respondent: John Ryan

Website: www.ryanfordenton.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

Changes in our Building Inspections Department both in the code and the culture to make Denton "Business Friendly".

Long Term planning for water conservation to handle future growth and times of drought.

Using common sense road construction planning/timing and alternate route education for citizens.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

JIT (just in time) manufacturing to supply products with short shelf life to the North Texas area and the South Central United States. Medical Services which draws not only from DFW but also half way to OK City. Distribution Centers for which I35 and 380 make us an ideal location.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

The two major obstacles are infrastructure and Building Inspections. Our infrastructure is improving slowly, it's a product of the growth without planning/action. A serious rework of our codes and policies is long overdue. Streamlining of our permitting process is absolutely necessary in order to make us competitive with other cities.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

Yes. Attracting high paying jobs is essential to expanding our tax base. Great companies attract other great companies, Peterbilt is an example of this. Raising the median income also attracts companies for which no incentive is necessary. This in turn keeps our sales tax dollars in Denton.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

If the tax freeze passes and Senate Bill 2 passes the effects will be accelerated. Essential services, police, fire, etc. should be the last to be cut. The Planning and Development Department is also essential to broadening the tax base which is the best way to overcome a revenue shortfall.

Respondent: Amanda Servis

Website: www.aheartforservis.com

In your opinion, what are the three most pressing issues facing Denton today?

Effective communication between council and citizens.

Consideration of every citizen and neighborhood in Denton.

Conservation of our resources.

Given Denton's position in the Dallas- Fort Worth area, what do you view as the top three areas of economic development we should be focusing on?

Incentivizing locally owned businesses over outside development.

Streets and roads.

School District transportation.

In your opinion, what are the largest obstacles to real property development in Denton and how would you address them?

We have high property taxes and I would like to work to lower them.

Are you in favor of public incentives to recruit quality businesses with higher paying jobs to Denton? Why or why not?

I'm in favor of giving incentives to locally owned businesses first.

If voters approve a property tax freeze for seniors, how would you deal with the City's income shortfall and other consequences?

I would make sure we're not wasting money on unnecessary spending.