

Detroit News election survey

2025 City Council Candidates

1. What is the role that the business community should be playing in Detroit? And how would you manage tax credits and other incentives to lure or keep businesses in the city? *

As a former Detroit City Councilman and a lifelong advocate for collaboration, I have always believed in building strong bridges between our communities and the business sector. The role of the business community in Detroit must go beyond profit, and toward being centered on inclusive growth, neighborhood investment, and creating pathways to employment for Detroiters. Businesses should be active partners in our revitalization, supporting local hiring, entrepreneurship, and community development efforts.

To that end, I support the use of responsible tax credits and targeted incentives, but only when they produce measurable public benefits. Returning back to the Council table, I would advocate for incentive agreements that are performance-based and transparent, requiring businesses to commit to hiring local residents, paying livable wages, and investing in workforce training. These agreements should also prioritize equity, ensuring that minority- and women-owned businesses, as well as businesses in underserved neighborhoods, have access to the same opportunities.

We must also hold businesses accountable. I would advocate for regular review of all incentive agreements and include community input in the evaluation process. If businesses fall short of their commitments, my approach is to notify of their mishaps, and if necessary, rescind incentives or renegotiate terms in the public interest. Detroit's business climate must be competitive, but never at the expense of the people.

By aligning economic growth with community empowerment, we can create a Detroit where prosperity is shared, businesses succeed, and neighborhoods thrive.

2. What has Mayor Mike Duggan and the current city council done well with business development and investment? And what have they done ineffectively, in your view? How would you change it? *

Mayor Mike Duggan and the current City Council deserve credit for several significant wins in business development and investment. Under their leadership, Detroit emerged from bankruptcy, rebuilt its financial footing through conservative budgets, tax capture strategies, and revitalized the riverfront and downtown core, including the mammoth Hudson's site and District Detroit, with strong private partnerships. The Administration and the legislation delivered over \$1 billion in affordable housing, mandated 20% affordable units in subsidized projects, and launched targeted workforce programs like Detroit at Work and the People Plan, helping over 40,000 Detroiters connect with jobs. Additionally, large-scale demolition efforts cleared tens of thousands of blighted buildings, raising property values and creating space for new investment

However, not all initiatives achieved their goals. Incentives such as District Detroit and Motor City Match often failed to deliver promised community and economic equity; too many relocations lacked local hiring or neighborhood benefit, and oversight lapses allowed non-Detroit businesses to receive city funds. The focus remains heavily on downtown, while neighborhoods continue to face red tape, high taxes, and slowed development.

Returning to the council table, I will redirect tax credits and PILOT incentives toward projects that hire Detroiters, comply with binding Community Benefits Agreements, and flow into neighborhood corridors, not just downtown. I will bolster financial controls and transparency in grant-making, ensuring funds reach local entrepreneurs instead of consultants or absentee developers. Collaborate towards streamline approval processes, lower the cost of doing business, and tie incentives to measurable job growth in local communities. Only then can all Detroiters share in Detroit's resurgence.

3. What would you do to help revitalize the commercial strips in Detroit's neighborhoods and refill them with small businesses? *

Neighborhood commercial strips and small "mom and pop" businesses are the lifeblood of Detroit's communities. They offer not only goods and services but also identity, safety, jobs, and a sense of belonging. As a former Councilman, I know firsthand that revitalizing these corridors is essential to restoring vibrancy in our neighborhoods.

To begin, I would advocate to streamline permitting and licensing processes, cutting the red tape that too often discourages local entrepreneurs. Our communities need a small business "concierge" system within city government, where real people assist real Detroiters navigate the steps to open and expand businesses.

Second, I will advocate for targeted grants and low-interest microloans for Detroit-based businesses, especially those owned by longtime residents, women, and minorities. Programs like Motor City Match need stronger community oversight to ensure dollars reach storefronts not only within the District for which I am running (District 2), but also along other business and historical corridors through the City of Detroit, and not just downtown.

Third, I will advocate for strategic investments in infrastructure; sidewalks, lighting, security, parking, and streetscapes; making our corridors clean, safe, and walkable. Not to be cosmetic upgrades, but attractions for foot traffic and customers.

Finally, previously serving during my council tenure, I will continue to collaborate closely with business associations, block clubs, and neighborhood groups to create localized commercial corridor plans that reflect the unique identity and needs of each area. Economic development must be community-driven.

Detroit's future depends on empowering those who have remained and believed in our neighborhoods. With the right support and leadership, our commercial strips can again become thriving centers of culture, commerce, and community.

4. Crime rates are going down, but there's still too much violence in the city. If elected, what would you add to current strategies, and what might you walk away from that you think is ineffective? *

As a former Detroit City Councilman, retired Police Executive, and U.S. Military officer, I understand that public safety is not only about enforcement, but also about opportunity, education, and trust. While we have seen a downward trend in crime rates, the level of violence remains unacceptable, especially in neighborhoods where residents feel forgotten.

Returning to Council, I will advocate for a more balanced, community-focused public safety strategy. That starts with investing in early intervention and youth outreach. We must expand programs that provide mentorship, vocational training, conflict resolution, and mental health support, especially in schools and return of recreation centers. We need to engage our young people before they enter the criminal justice system.

Second, I will continue to increase partnerships between police and the community through true community policing, not just patrols, but enhance neighborhood officers, such as our Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO) program, who build relationships and proactively prevent crime. I support technology like ShotSpotter and cameras, but we must not rely solely on surveillance to address systemic issues. Continue to support community active groups.

What we must walk away from is the outdated, punitive-first model that ignores root causes. Over-policing in low-income neighborhoods creates fear, not safety. I advocate to shift funding toward violence interruption models that involve credible messengers, people from the community trained to mediate disputes before they escalate.

Finally, I would collaborate to improve police accountability and transparency. Trust is earned. By addressing public safety through prevention, engagement, and justice, we can build safer, stronger neighborhoods, where every resident feels seen, heard, and protected.

5. The city still has one of the highest poverty rates - for both adults and children. Do you have an anti-poverty agenda? And how would you pay for it?

Detroit's persistent poverty especially among our children, is both a moral and economic crisis that demands focused leadership and bold, actionable policy. As a former Councilman, retired Detroit Police executive, and Regional Commander for the Five Northern Provinces of Iraq, I understand that breaking the cycle of poverty requires more than sympathy, it requires strategy.

My anti-poverty agenda consist of: First, investing in economic mobility. Supporting job creation through neighborhood-based small business development, expanding workforce training for high-demand careers, and providing wraparound services like childcare, transportation, and housing support to remove barriers to employment.

Second, advocate to champion early childhood education and literacy programs. Poverty begins early, so must intervention. Every child deserves access to quality pre-K, tutoring, and safe after-

school programs. We must also invest in youth mentorship and trades education in our high schools to give students a direct path from learning to earning. Also providing such services for parents.

Third, I look to propose an “Opportunity and Equity Fund” financed through a combination of redirected tax abatements, public-private partnerships, and a reallocation of underutilized city development funds. Incentives should be tied to measurable outcomes in local hiring, job training, and affordable housing, not just bricks and mortar.

Finally, I will advocate for stronger partnerships with nonprofits, faith-based groups, and foundations already doing the work, to scale proven anti-poverty efforts.

Detroit will rise fully only when all residents, especially our most vulnerable, have a chance to succeed. Fighting poverty is not charity, but economic justice and a moral obligation to the soul of Detroit.

6. Since the bankruptcy, the city has managed to maintain a balanced budget. A lot of federal support is going away. How will you be able to continue to keep the city on a sound fiscal path without that money from Washington? *

As a former Detroit City Councilman, retired Detroit Police executive, and U.S. Military officer, I understand the discipline required to maintain financial stability, especially when external support begins to fade. Since the bankruptcy, Detroit has made commendable progress in managing a balanced budget. However, with much of the federal pandemic-era support phasing out, we must now exercise smart, forward-looking leadership to stay on a sound fiscal path.

First, focus on strengthening our local revenue base. By expanding neighborhood-based economic development, not just in downtown but across our commercial corridors, providing a tax base growth through increased small business activity, property value stabilization, and local job creation. A thriving local economy is the foundation of sustainable revenue.

Second, prioritize spending. I will advocate for performance-based budgeting, tying city expenditures to measurable community outcomes. This ensures every dollar spent delivers value and is aligned with the needs of Detroiters.

Third, we must improve efficiency within city departments by eliminating duplicative services, modernizing outdated systems, and streamlining procurement. These steps can produce real savings without sacrificing service quality.

Lastly, I will seek to leverage regional collaboration and targeted public-private partnerships to share costs and resources, especially in transportation, infrastructure, and workforce development.

While the loss of federal dollars will be felt, it is an opportunity to reinforce fiscal discipline, strengthen local accountability, and ensure Detroit continues to rebuild, by investing in the people, protecting essential services, and planning with both courage, care and prayer.

7. We recently saw two children freeze to death in a car, because their family had no home or shelter to protect them from the cold. Is it possible to assure every child is sheltered and safe? How would you ensure that? *

The tragic deaths of the Currie children should shake every one of us to our core. No child in the City of Detroit, or anywhere in America should die from exposure or homelessness. This heartbreaking loss is not just a failure of one agency; but a failure of an entire system that did not respond with urgency, compassion, or coordination. As a humanitarian, I believe we must treat this not as an isolated tragedy, but as a moral turning point.

It is mandatory to assure every child is sheltered and safe, prioritize housing as a fundamental right. Returning to council I will advocate for a comprehensive, citywide Children and Families Housing Initiative that brings together city departments, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and schools to identify at-risk families before crisis strikes. We must improve coordination between housing services, Child Protective Services, and mental health care to ensure no child or caregiver falls through the cracks.

Additionally, we must expand emergency shelter capacity with trauma-informed, family-centered models, not just beds, but case management, transportation, and transitional housing support. I will advocate for a city-managed rapid response unit to intervene when families face eviction or unsafe living conditions.

Finally, we must continue to invest in affordable housing development and support rent stabilization tools. With affordable housing, we must also have affordable utilities. Housing is no good if residential utilities are not in operation. Shelter is safety. No more excuses, no more silence. We owe it to the Currie children and every child in Detroit to act with compassion, urgency, and accountability.

8. Detroit has struggled to provide affordable housing for poor people for a long time. Tell us about your affordable housing strategy, including how you would pay for the city to do better. *

Detroit's affordable housing crisis is not just about buildings, but about dignity, equity, and the future of our families. Too many Detroiters are being priced out of the neighborhoods they have resided for generations. As a former Councilman, retired Police executive, and U.S. Military officer, I believe we must lead with compassion, data, and collaboration to deliver real solutions.

My affordable housing strategy begins by aligning development policies with Detroit's real income levels. Current projects often rely on the federal Average Median Income (AMI) for the broader metro region, which includes wealthier suburbs and distorts what is truly "affordable" for Detroiters. I will advocate to recalibrate affordability metrics based on Detroit's local AMI to ensure housing serves those most in need.

Next, we must increase investment in deeply affordable and supportive housing, particularly for seniors, families, and vulnerable individuals. I look to expand the Affordable Housing Trust Fund using a combination of redirected tax abatements, developer linkage fees, and philanthropic partnerships. These funds must be tied to clear, enforceable commitments: rent caps, long-term affordability, and local hiring. We also need to preserve existing affordable housing stock by supporting low-income homeowners with rehab grants and protecting tenants from displacement through right-to-counsel and rent stabilization tools.

Finally, I will collaborate with state and federal legislators to secure sustained funding, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Housing Choice Vouchers, and infrastructure dollars.

Affordable housing is not optional, but a necessity; and again, affordable utilities, is just as important as affordable housing. We must act urgently and responsibly to keep Detroit a residential city for all and at all level cost.

9. Many, many people in Detroit - including some key business and philanthropic interests - have expressed concerns about replacing I375 with a wide boulevard. Do you support this project as it is moving forward now? If not, how would you change it? *

As a lifetime resident, professional careerist and servant in Detroit, I know firsthand how infrastructure projects like I-375 have historically divided, displaced, and disadvantaged Detroit's Black and working-class communities. The original construction of I-375 was not just a road project, but a deliberate disruption of thriving neighborhoods like Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. We must not repeat history under the guise of progress.

While I recognize that replacing I-375 with a wide boulevard presents opportunities, such as reconnecting neighborhoods and stimulating development, my support is conditional on how the project prioritizes equity, inclusion, and long-term community benefit. Currently, many Detroiters rightfully feel left out of the conversation.

Returning to the council table, I would push for a more inclusive planning process, ensuring that impacted residents, small businesses, and community leaders have decision-making power, not just an advisory roles. I will advocate for a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) tied to the project that guarantees affordable housing, small business support, and job opportunities for local residents; particularly for those who historically bore the brunt of the freeway's construction.

Additionally, I would ensure that the design does not become just another high-speed commuter corridor. The boulevard must prioritize pedestrian safety, public transit access, green space, and cultural restoration; truly healing the scars left behind.

Infrastructure must connect not divide. We have one chance to do this right, and I will advocate to make sure it is done with justice, vision, and accountability.

10. Economists say the city's income tax is a disincentive to residency, and the property tax is the state's highest but is low yield and assessments have been susceptible to unfairness. What would you do with Detroit's tax structure? *

Detroit's current tax structure is outdated, inequitable, and ultimately counterproductive to growth. Throughout my resident span in Detroit, I have seen how excessive property taxes and income tax policies discourage residency, suppress investment, and overburden working families, especially in neighborhoods that have already been historically underserved.

Returning to the council table, I will First, collaborate to reform property tax assessments to ensure fairness and accuracy. For too long, Detroiters, particularly in lower-income areas, have faced inflated assessments that do not reflect true market value. I support adopting annual assessments, improved digital transparency, and strong appeal protections to guard against over taxation. Fairness must be the foundation.

Second, we must pursue a long-term plan to responsibly reduce the city's reliance on high property taxes by growing the tax base, not simply raising rates. This means stabilizing neighborhoods, incentivizing homeownership, and attracting residents and small businesses back to Detroit. A healthy, expanded base reduces the burden on any one household.

Third, I would advocate for a comprehensive review of the city income tax, especially for residents, while protecting core city services. We must build collaborative relations with state legislators to explore revenue-sharing reforms and structural relief that does not hollow out Detroit's budget.

Ultimately, we need a tax system that encourages residency, supports homeowners, and aligns with economic growth, not one that punishes it. Smart tax reform, performed equitably, can restore faith in city government and help Detroiters build wealth in the very communities they have fought to hold together.

11. The city council has no direct control of schools, but can have an effect, through speech and action, on the education agenda. How would you use that bully pulpit? *

While the Detroit City Council does not directly govern our public schools, it has a powerful voice and I intend to use that platform boldly, strategically, and consistently to uplift education as one of my top priorities. As a former instructor for the SAT examination for high school students, former adjutant college professor, retired Police executive, and former Regional Commander for the Five Northern Provinces of Iraq , I know that education is linked to public safety, economic development, and the long-term stability for Detroit and our citizenry.

I look to use the Council's bully pulpit to advocate towards increase investment in early childhood education, literacy initiatives, mental health support, and career-readiness programs. These are not just educational concerns, but citywide imperatives that affect every resident, every neighborhood, and the future for Detroit workforce.

I will also collaborate to strengthen partnerships between the city, Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD), and charter institutions to coordinate wraparound services, safe routes to schools, clean and modern facilities, recreation access, and after-school programming. These are essential areas where Detroit has direct influence and should act with urgency.

Additionally, I would advocate for an annual “State of Education in Detroit” hearing before Council, bringing in students, parents, educators, and community stakeholders to share challenges and solutions publicly, keeping education front and center in our civic dialogue.

Lastly, I will utilize my voice to advocate for policies that protect children from housing instability, hunger, and violence; for, a child who is hungry, homeless, or unsafe cannot learn.

City leaders must be champions for education, even without direct control. Our children deserve nothing less than a united city of advocates fighting for their future.

12. Tell us about your jobs agenda. *

My jobs agenda is centered on equity, access, and opportunity. Ensuring that every Detroiter, regardless of zip code, has a clear and attainable path to a good-paying job. As a former Councilman, retired Police executive, and U.S. Military officer, I have witnessed how employment transforms lives, stabilizes families, and strengthens entire neighborhoods.

I will prioritize investing in workforce development and vocational training that aligns with today’s job market; skilled trades, healthcare, green energy, public safety, and technology. We must collaborate with unions, community colleges, and training centers to provide certification programs and apprenticeships targeted toward youth, returning citizens, and those displaced by automation.

Next, I will support small business growth as a powerful job creator in our neighborhoods. This includes reducing bureaucratic red tape, expanding access to microloans and grants, ensuring fair access to city contracts, especially for Detroit-based, minority- and women-owned businesses.

Additionally, I will advocate for a citywide local hiring policy tied to tax incentives and development deals. If a business or contractor receives public support, it must commit to hiring Detroiters and paying livable wages. Development must benefit those who live in Detroit, not just those who build in Detroit.

Finally, I will champion job pathways that include wraparound supports like childcare, transportation, and mental health services, in order that Detroiters not only obtain jobs, but keep them.

Detroit is exceptionally talented; full of talent and potential. My job agenda is about unlocking that potential and creating an economy that works for everyone, not just a few. Detroiters are ready to work, and I am ready to lead and provide opportunity.