

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts and answer these questions. My answers are below. There were also a couple of items I wanted to address but I couldn't fit into any of the questions, so those are at the end.

Respectfully,

Jared Rutberg

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QUESTION #1 - GENERAL BELIEF

When you hear the term “SUSTAINABILITY,” what does it mean to you? How would you implement sustainable measures in your jurisdiction?

From a consumption and policy standpoint, it means to manage natural resources to ensure their long term availability. From a construction standpoint, it additionally means to use products that will not need to be replaced as quickly and/or reduce maintenance.

I already have participated in the implementation of sustainable measures in our community.

- 15 years ago I successfully presented to the Covington Historic Preservation Commission, getting them to begin allowing non-wood products to be used for doors, windows, siding and trim as long as it appeared like the original historic product. This cut homeowner long term costs (and sometimes short term also) while also reducing wood consumption in the historic district.
- On the Planning Commission, I successfully advocated for the required use of sustainable construction materials in both commercial and multi-family construction.
- Both of these measures help to ensure both a positive environmental impact, but also enable structures to appear and function better for a much longer period while simultaneously saving the property owner on maintenance costs.
- As a business owner, we perform a LOT of recycling, ranging from oil to metal. (If the City was outfitted so we could recycle corrugated, paper and plastic, we'd be happily approaching zero-waste; I'll address that separately below.) We have even done presentations to local Cub Scout troops as well as other organizations so they could see the opportunities in a commercial setting.

QUESTION #2 - LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

In a 2022 study funded by the City of Covington, the consulting firm Urban3 performed antax revenues and cost of services to determine which types of development produce a positive cash flow for the city, vs. those costing more to service than the revenues generated. They found the best economic performance in areas with multi-story, more compact, mixed-use development. However, city residents often raise concerns about the impacts of density. As an elected official, what would be your philosophy for balancing those interests/perspectives in your municipality?

As a member of the Planning Commission, I have participated in and reviewed the Urban3 plan. As we stated when they produced it, it is accurate in some ways but also fails to recognize other factors. Undoubtedly higher density reduces city costs (and resource consumption) by shorter lengths of utility feeds, reduced overall utility consumption or reduction in road mileage. Also, over-55 (senior) developments positively impact due to A) Filling the void in available senior housing. B) Use less

Police/Fire Services than the average home. C) Do not input students into the school system while still paying the school tax, thus offsetting student-occupied homes.

However, the study assumed ALL multi-family developments would be developed in a “smart” way—in conjunction with necessary services such as grocery stores, restaurants, medical and other necessities, in a manner that did not negatively impact surrounding residents and in a method considering sustainability. It also made the assumption that almost zero families (versus singles/couples without children) live in apartments. This may be true in someplace like Atlantic Station, but locally that is not the case.

Unfortunately the majority of developments that have been built and/or being proposed locally are remote/stand-alone complexes, requiring a high density of residents to continuously get on the roads to reach those services (and therefore void any traffic study provided by developer and contradict the basis of Urban3’s assessment). Further, Urban3 failed to address the impact of a sudden influx of students from a given multi-family development on the local schools (since they fill in a couple of months versus years) nor the fact that far more students would be enrolled than the development pays for in combined school taxes, putting our already cash-strapped school system into a deeper hole. Finally, EVERY one of these developers has tried to reduce construction standards and sustainability practices, while simultaneously refusing to accommodate neighboring communities regarding traffic control, safety, noise, etc.

So yes, I understand what Urban3 is stating and agree on many points. HOWEVER, they do not account for local trends being completely different than their model, ignore impacts on schools and are trying to push a specific model. Covington needs to be Covington, not Duluth or Decatur. We need to maintain our community uniqueness and identity. Smaller in-town projects (ideally locally owned) and projects co-located with services can be good, but most of what we’ve been receiving is neither of those.

QUESTION #3 - SOLID WASTE

Businesses and educational institutions in our community are implementing “Zero Waste” programs to dramatically reduce the volume of waste reaching the landfill from their operations. What investments, if any, would you support your government making to pursue similar objectives?

Each investment would be approached from a business perspective. What is the cost? Does the positive impact justify the cost? Is there grant money available to assist with implementation? I’m up for anything if the answers are positive. One thing I would like to see is a more affordable way for businesses to recycle, which currently is not an option for any of our small businesses. This is a major roadblock to our small businesses and in my first 30 days it will be directly addressed.

QUESTION #4 - CLEAN ENERGY

In our area, the governments of Athens-Clarke County, Atlanta, Augusta, Clarkston, DeKalb County, Decatur, Savannah, and Winterville have all set clean energy targets for 2050 or earlier. Would you be willing to propose/support clean energy targets in your jurisdiction?

Yes, as long as they are feasible.

QUESTION #5 – CLIMATE POLLUTION REDUCTION

The state of Georgia and the Atlanta Regional Commission have received EPA grants for \$3 million and \$1 million, respectively, to develop collaborating climate pollution reduction plans. These plans will open grant opportunities for municipalities in the 29-county metro Atlanta area to reduce their climate pollution. Drawdown Georgia, a statewide initiative led by researchers from UGA, Georgia Tech and Emory University, identifies 20 Georgia-specific climate solutions that provide a roadmap for reducing climate emissions across the state. What climate pollution reduction actions would you prioritize and seek funding for in your city?

First and foremost would be determine a way to reduce the roadside trash in our city. It's awful. This isn't just about aesthetics, it's about having pride in our community. Further, trash finds a way to creeks, our drinking water, attracts rodents, etc. All of these are health concerns and damaging to our environment. I have supported multiple local projects over the years ranging from Adopt-A-Street to Rivers Alive. But we need to come up with a way to keep our community clean year-round, not just after a clean-up event. One component of that is to get our Adopt-A-Street program in full-swing.

Second, we need to find opportunities for commercial/industrial to be able to recycle as easily as residential. Currently commercial/industrial gets a dumpster and no recycling options (except corrugated, and only if you pay for the extra dumpster). With the closure of the City Recycling Center, the opportunity for the small portion of small businesses willing/able to haul recyclables over has been eliminated. The end result is no business in the city recycles anything but corrugated, and that is limited to only large industrial companies. This is a horrible burden on our environment in general and the landfill specifically. I would definitely be open to tax credits or other incentives to encourage commercial/industrial to implement full recycling programs.

Next, we need to seek additional opportunities for/encourage residents to use solar. This reduces the burden on our network and provides an opportunity for the City to buy-back electricity at a lower cost than current sourcing.

Finally, I would be highly interested in any grant or other opportunities offered at the state or federal level to encourage better care for our planet in general and our city specifically. There are infinite opportunities out there; we need to work harder to take advantage of them.

Two things weren't asked that I'd like to address:

First, we need to continue to improve the ability for our citizens to walk/bike safely. Whether it be for exercise or alternative transportation, we need to continue to address this. Legion Drive and Conyers Street both are wide enough to allow for bike lanes to be striped without road construction in both directions. This will greatly improve safety of these streets and add over 2 miles of bike path and increase our non-vehicle connectivity. Jackson Highway is a MAJOR safety concern. The center "turn" lane is currently being used as a passing lane, a bike lane and a sidewalk. Further, there is a ¼ mile section where children are running across dodging traffic. Since non-vehicle traffic is prominent, we need to safely account for it before disaster occurs. As a member of the 278CID board, incorporating non-vehicular transportation has been a priority in our plan.

Second, I would LOVE to get a program going to encourage better conservation practices by our residents. There are so many things that can be done to reduce water consumption, storm water

discharge, utility usage, etc. There are a number of things that we do both at our home and at our businesses to conserve that if others implemented, real impact can be made. If our 14,000 residents practiced minimal conservation efforts on their own, the impact would be much greater than what a few individuals would achieve doing maximum effort. I would gladly support and participate in such a program, including demonstrating practices we have incorporated at our home that others could easily replicate.