

*This fall Citizens for a Fair Ferndale (fairferndale.org) seeks to help Ferndale voters get acquainted with those running for public office. To this end, we ask all City Council and Mayor Candidates to **complete this CFF Candidate Questionnaire**. CFF will use your responses to create formatted .pdfs, linked to the event on Sunday, October 24. We will also post completed questionnaires on our website fairferndale.org and share them on social media days after the event. Questionnaires should be **completed and returned to CFF c/o Bridget Deegan-Krause (bridgetmail@gmail.com)** by the end of day, Thursday, October 21.*

CFF Candidate Questionnaire Mayor and City Council Candidates November 2021 Election

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Please provide responses to the following prompts:

Why did you decide to run for City Council/Mayor? What has prepared you to hold a City Council/Mayor seat?

I am currently serving my first two-year term as Mayor. I served ten years as a city councilperson, rounding out almost 12 years representing the Ferndale community.

As a community leader, I have managed the city's multi-million dollar budgets, identified and negotiated cost reductions, championed service enhancements, and led significant departmental reorganizations.

I addressed multiple major community crises: power outages; the Great Recession that led to downsizing our workforce; restructured our high level of services and stabilized our tax base, and more recently, the public health pandemic and lead line replacements.

Working together with the city council, our city administration, and staff, along with our community members, is how we get through these intense times and adapt.

My educational background:

- Masters degree in Urban Planning, Wayne State University
- Bachelors of Arts, Communications, and German from Albion College
- Certified Climate Change Professional (CC-P) through the Association of Climate Change Officers

- Certified Project Manager Professional (PMP) through the Project Management Institute, (years recertified 2003-202)
- 2018 SEMCOG Taubman Fellowship to attend the Harvard Kennedy School Executive Leadership Training for State and Local Government.
- 2012 Certificate in Walkable Urban Development & Place-Based Strategies, George Washington University.

Describe the type of development that you see as most beneficial to Ferndale.

In 2019, CFF asked candidates the same question about growth and development. I'm repurposing a portion of my first mayoral campaign answers because the focus remains the same.

"As a practicing urban planner, my focus is on creating great, walkable places in our downtown and building strong, healthy neighborhoods. A healthy and livable community offers a range of housing options for all income levels, household sizes, and all stages of life. A thriving community offers places to shop and dine, provides jobs for the local and regional workforce, offers a range of amenities that residents can easily access, and places for seniors, parents, and children to be active.

Ferndale is a well-known municipal leader in promoting responsible, managed growth, fulfilling a 20-year vision to grow the downtown that offers a mix of building types, a range of housing opportunities, and jobs to support the local and regional workforce. The city's master plan guides what kind of growth we want and what it should look like. We are having community conversations now about how to manage future development and what it should look like.

The city's most valuable physical asset is access and proximity to Woodward and Nine Mile, two major transit corridors. Density and walkability are the things that attract people to live, work and play in Ferndale. A well-designed, mixed-use development, a mix of retail, office, commercial, and housing, offers the most benefit to any urban area. An increase in the tax base, living options, ability to live car-free, access to transit to live and work, and reduce traffic and walk to everyday amenities is a sign of a healthy, thriving community. After the Great Recession in 2006, when the real estate market recovered, Ferndale saw its first increase in new mixed-use development in decades.

A range of housing options is also needed. While 80% of our city is zoned for residential uses, our homes are built on 35 to 45-foot lots, creating tightly-knit neighborhoods. Small multi-family buildings are incorporated into nearly every street, allowing for mixed-income neighborhoods, not the bland McMansions of the exurbs. Our residential neighborhoods allow for accessory dwelling units, often called granny flats, which can provide affordable housing options without dramatic alterations to what an existing area looks or feels like. We are planning for fewer cars, stronger transit connections, and even greater walkability by building residential density near our commercial and transit hubs."

What do you see as the challenges and opportunities faced by the city as it considers future development?

All new development brings opportunities and challenges. In many scenarios, they are interrelated. For example, new housing in the downtown impacts parking availability. At

the same time, the closer people live to dining, shopping, work, and major transit lines, the less they need a car, let alone multiple vehicles. Balancing these competing needs - housing, patrons for our local businesses, and the need to manage parking pressures while advocating and planning for transportation alternatives like walking, biking, and transit - will never make everyone happy.

My focus is on our city's long-term viability and sustainability. Ferndale shows other communities how to rebuild their populations and tax bases while retaining the character that makes Ferndale, Ferndale.

Managing change is a challenge for everyone every day. Our jobs change, our children grow and leave our homes, our homes change with our needs. Our city changes as well. We must add new housing options to meet residents' changing needs and welcome new residents and businesses. We must support businesses to grow and evolve. We must manage the infrastructure we've inherited, making it safer, more sustainable, and more cost-effective to maintain in the future. Ferndale is a vibrant and welcoming community because we've changed and evolved more rapidly in the past 20 years, not because we've stood still.

I look forward to working with residents, business owners, our schools, and others as we decide how Ferndale will continue to change in the future.

Opportunities

More Places for People

When we make safer, more inviting places for people to gather, they will come! Schiffer Park is now a more inviting space to hang out with family and friends. I saw kids playing chess on a Saturday morning which would have never happened before the remodel. The Broadway in the Burbs event in front of the Dot was a huge success. We are investing in our parks and in maintaining and expanding the vibrant outdoor spaces in our downtown.

New Housing

While we may need to find the ideal lot size or the number of units, building neighborhoods that include small apartments and duplexes will help keep Ferndale affordable for all and encourage small, local developers to invest. Ferndale's neighborhoods were built mainly before 1950 and reflect a mix of housing types. Mixed in with single-family homes are small apartments buildings, duplexes, and four-squares typically on lots not much larger than those around them. Like many cities around the county, Ferndale limited the ability to mix housing types like this after World War II. When we look at our neighborhoods, we know that mixing works. Let's do more of it so that families and individuals at all income levels can live in the community we love.

Adding new housing to a city as built-out as Ferndale won't ever be able to accommodate our community's changing needs. Our residents want to age in place, bringing challenges to retrofitting our older homes for greater accessibility. Greater accessibility for seniors means greater accessibility for all who need it.

Challenges:**Parking Versus People**

We are experiencing new housing developments where developers rely on the market to decide how much parking they need to make their projects “pencil out.” A parking spot is a piece of real estate that has value. When the number of units is reduced to accommodate more parking, typically, the cost of the rental unit goes up to pay for the parking spots. The conversation about how much parking is needed, when it is necessary, and where it should be located will always be ongoing. Changing mobility will continue with electric and autonomous vehicles becoming more prevalent soon.

Housing Near Transit/Not So Great Transit

Ferndale is located on a central transit line best suited for walkable housing options so people can choose to live car-free. Developers are proposing new housing located near transit because people want to have lower transportation and housing costs. Owning a car is expensive, and we cannot assume having a vehicle is a de facto choice. Meanwhile, the Fast SMART bus is fast if you are going north and south on Woodward, while it's a challenge to get anywhere else quick and reliably across the region. The region's underinvested system is not preferred for most people living, working, or visiting Ferndale. The city cannot ignore the asset of its walkable downtown with good bus service access in proximity to housing.

How do you see Ferndale moving toward racial equity?

Cities have multiple pathways that move communities toward racial equity that improve outcomes for everyone. A community's body of work to remove racial inequities is always an ongoing journey. It requires elected and administrative leadership dedicating resources to create a system capable of bringing about change.

Detroit and the suburbs are some of the most segregated regions in the US. Institutional and structural racism has shaped all our communities, including Ferndale. Racism has impacted the design of our infrastructure (roads and transit) to housing through zoning, access to green space and recreation, and climate resiliency. It's incumbent on elected officials to understand how to design and implement interventions to counter and reverse the impacts of racial disparities.

In Ferndale, the city's journey to bring about racial equity and change became more intentional in 2016 when the city council adopted the [21st Century Community Policing Principles](#). Our police department restructured to move toward more fair and impartial policing. Difficult but necessary community conversations about our police department led to these initial strategic shifts. In six years, the police department has earned police accreditation, invested in ongoing implicit bias training, and shifted its organizational culture to be anti-racist. Police leadership, city administration, and city council continue to make [advancements, including hiring, data management, annual reports, and recently launched a transparency dashboard](#).

The 2020 pandemic elevated racial inequities in health, transportation, housing, employment, and access to resources. George Floyd's murder and national outcry of racial disparities shifted leaders' mindsets in government, business, and philanthropy. In June 2020, the city council passed a [Declaration of Anti-racism](#) to demonstrate its intentionality to broaden its focus to dismantle racial structures across our local government administration that includes all departments and plan for an equitable community. Since this resolution, the city council's thinking has evolved as we learned, creating new partnerships with access to new tools and resources.

Cities need more than one community-driven strategic plan to guide intentional racial equity actions. Ferndale has *five* community-driven plans to guide system changes, policy, programs and prioritize investments that build a more equitable and resilient community.

First, the city is committed to developing an equity plan and policy for our local government, resulting from our new partnership with the [Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#). The internal work to make long-lasting changes in organizational culture, international policies, and systems is underway and progressing. [The city documents its progress on the city website](#).

Second, residents have prioritized equity in the city's [Ferndale Moves Mobility and Transportation plan](#) updated and adopted in March 2021. Goal 3 priority is Equity, defined by *"prioritize access to high-quality, non-automobile transportation options for people historically underrepresented in transportation planning including people of color, low-*

income people, and people with disabilities.” The recommended and prioritized projects in the plan demonstrate where the city council needs to invest in advancing these equitable transportation and mobility goals within our infrastructure.

The third, fourth, and fifth plans are the master land use plan, parks and recreation plan, and the first-ever climate action plan, all concurrently updated now with significant planned public engagement and community voices informing the process. Our values leading this planning process are equity and inclusion declared on our [Plan Ferndale](#) project page. The climate action plan shows equity to create a more just transition to a climate-resilient community. We need resident voices to inform what this needs to look like going forward.

In September, the Planning Commission and the City Council had a joint meeting to discuss engaging different members of our community, including people of color, low-income residents, and renters. Both bodies recognized and publicly stated the following: *“we still have lots of work to do to embed equity and inclusion into all decision-making – this planning process is firmly rooted in confronting these issues directly and identifying where we can be doing better”*. [The September 13 presentation](#) describes the background and context of the planning process.

In addition, the city council is moving forward to identify the best way to define, design, and implement a police citizens advisory committee. We formalized this project with [a resolution](#) at the October 11 city council meeting. It will take time and resources to identify how to get this structure of a citizens advisory commission right instead of adding another duplicative process. Our city charter requires a Civil Service Board. This board has three appointed community members with advisory responsibilities for personnel policy, police reviews, and other advisory duties. Based on feedback from current board members, we know that they are underutilized, and the city charter language for this commission is outdated.

Going forward, I look to strengthen the city's relationship with the school district as we face new challenges that require partnership. A new door opened for long-term cross-border relationship building with Detroit with the joint neighborhood meetings between Ferndale and Detroit residents to discuss the challenges at the 8 Mile/Woodward underpass. I know the city's DPW Southwest storage is an eye-sore physical barrier separating Royal Oak Township residents from Ferndale neighborhoods. We're working to identify permanent design solutions to beautify the property.

Together community leaders, city officials, and administration seek to implement long-lasting changes to both policies and systems that benefit our residents, especially our black residents. I acknowledge that these planning processes can feel slow and insufficient, yet they are necessary to create deep transformational change in more equitable communities.

I'm working to become a better leader and steward in this space as an anti-racist. Do I always get it right? No. Do I make mistakes? Yes. I continuously look inward about my

white fragility and biases to elevate my understanding of the issues and gain the skills to change toward a more racially equitable Ferndale.

Describe what you view as the pros and the cons of the Woodward road diet.

For over 17 years, I have been advocating for better and safer street infrastructure, transportation, and mobility in my profession and as an elected official. It's been my life's work to rebalance streets for all users not only in Ferndale but across Metro Detroit communities.

Our Shared Challenge

Woodward Avenue has been the most complicated and perplexing ongoing issue because the city does not own the 8-lane corridor. MDOT owns and controls it. For over 12 years as a city official, I have heard resident and business complaints about how uncomfortable it is to walk and bike on Woodward. How dangerous it feels to cross Woodward and the indignity for a pedestrian that cannot get across in one crosswalk light. Even drivers complain about the low visibility of oncoming cars when turning right onto Woodward from side streets and how easy it is not to see people walking and biking from the opposite direction. Drivers exceed the 35mph speed limit; it's not their fault either. The avenue was designed for faster car travel with four lanes.

Woodward Avenue's original design no longer serves all of our community's needs. When equitable access to all users is the driving value (pun intended) to implement fixes, we must look at new ways to solve these community shared challenges.

I know it's a big change for our community, businesses, and suburban commuters driving to Detroit. It's transformational, really, to rebalance Woodward and give a little more space to other ways of getting around town besides the car. Ferndale is known for its creativity and ingenuity; we've done big things together before, like putting West Nine mile on a lane reduction from four to two in the late 1990s. These investments were instrumental in our downtown's revitalization. Rebalancing Woodward is another significant change that will benefit our people and business community. Join me in supporting implementing safety improvements.

[Woodward Moves](#) is the project name for the Woodward Avenue Safety Improvement Project. MDOT plans to repave Woodward from 8 Mile to the I696 Interchange in March 2022. In preparation for repaving, the city has leveraged this opportunity to implement short-term safety fixes. I have been upfront and transparent that the city cannot pay for these safety fixes independently. In February 2021, both Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge applied for a \$3.9M federal Transportation Alternatives grant. As of this questionnaire, MDOT has yet to inform the city when they will make a final decision on design or the grant award (it's very frustrating for me).

Pros:

- Traffic calming, a term to rebalance the street, so cars drive the 35mph posted speed limit. Woodward was designed for 100,000 vehicles daily, but only 42,000 drive through daily. There is excess capacity to reduce a lane to calm traffic.
- Shorter crossing distance for pedestrians at crosswalks (8-10 feet less)
- Safer intersections with more visibility
- Spot improvements for wider sidewalks, transit stops, green stormwater infrastructure.
- A dedicated travel lane with separation from car travel provides safety features for people rolling on bikes, skateboards, wheelchairs, one-wheelers, e-bikes, and probably e-scooters in the future. Now people choose to ride their bikes on the Woodward sidewalks because biking on Woodward is unsafe. However, it's also dangerous for people to ride their bikes on a sidewalk because of the high potential for collisions with people walking.
- Paid for with ACT 51 federal transportation dollars allocated to cities, not city tax.
- Are there any benefits for long-term repaving/replacement/maintenance costs by reducing the lanes of travel? Not only am I tired of being the only downtown on the Woodward Corridor with an eight-lane freeway running through it, but I'm tired of paying for this unnecessary infrastructure that my grandparents built but that I can't afford to maintain/rebuild.

Cons:

The real disappointment for the repaving project is that it's not a reconstruction project. The safety improvements are a good start, but it doesn't deliver enough of what residents and businesses want. A reconstruction project would provide wider sidewalks, more crosswalks at identified desired cross points, more street trees, and bioswales to manage better stormwater runoff, raised bike lanes, and more barrier protection with the bike lanes.

What is your position on affordable housing in Ferndale?

Housing is a right. Everyone deserves a place to live that they can afford. According to Oakland County and the state of Michigan's housing studies, an individual making \$15 an hour cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment anywhere in the state, including Ferndale. The national affordability benchmark for an individual or family is 30% of income is spent on housing. Our housing problems are national and statewide, while Ferndale addresses these challenges locally.

What's happening with housing in Ferndale? Getting answers to this question is critical to understanding how best to move forward. I have been a vocal champion for a more strategic housing policy that kicked off in 2017. My voice led to the development and adoption of [Ferndale's Community Affordability and Inclusive Housing Plan](#) in 2020. By investing in a strategic housing plan, with expert guidance, the city now has the data to guide decision-making and community-supported priorities on focusing policy, programs, and investments to address our housing challenges and advance emerging opportunities.

We learned from this exploration that about 1 in every 4 Ferndale households are considered housing cost-burdened or paying more than 30% of their income. Working professionals, young families, senior citizens, students, and food/hospitality workers are in greatest need of support.

Our local housing market will not create the conditions for lasting equity without public intervention and stewardship. The city can create conditions to solve these issues through policy, including our Master Plan Use Plan, applying strategic incentives to developers seeking to build new housing that aligns with the city's affordable housing and sustainability goals, among other guidelines.

Restricting development or not allowing new development places pressure on our existing housing supply. More demand means less supply, and then housing sale prices increase along with rents. I know our renters and young new home buyers are feeling the real estate market pressures now and the tax "pop up" that happens when a house is sold.

As Mayor, I have supported new developments such as the [Raymond E. Shepard House](#) project on E. Nine Mile that will have a range of rental price points for people of all ages and abilities.

My focus on creating more equitable housing choices at various price points is not just a local focus. Access to affordable housing is a statewide issue that has a direct local impact through state planning and legislation. This past summer, I was invited to participate in the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Partner Advisory Council to offer input on potential housing strategies for the [state's first-ever statewide housing plan](#).

Meanwhile, as mayor, I support the bi-partisan [Housing Michigan Coalition](#) and Ferndale is a community partner. The Housing Michigan Coalition consists of community, business, and government organizations whose efforts support increasing housing supply and affordability. I give feedback on proposed legislation through this collaborative effort and

the Michigan Municipal League, also advocating with our state representative and state senator that

What role do city governments have in moving toward climate sustainability?

Cities have become leaders in solving climate change and achieving the goals of the [United Nations Paris Agreement](#), the global commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to stop the earth's temperature from increasing by 1.5 degrees celsius.

City governments have a significant role in planning for, investing in, and leading projects that create more climate-resilient communities that reduce our community-wide carbon footprint. Mayors and city councils are leading the way. I'm proud to say our city council members have been champions and regional leaders of climate resiliency in Ferndale.2019

In 2019, my mayoral campaign platform cited a goal to become a carbon-neutral city. Since taking my seat, I have accomplished the following in pursuit of climate neutrality with unanimous support from the city council:

Carbon Neutral City Goal:

- As mayor, signed on to Local Governments for Sustainability's [\(ICLEI\) Race to Zero campaign](#), becoming one of the first 25 invited US mayors to join the ICLEI150 mayor's sign-on goal to support the UNFCCC Cities Race to Zero global initiative.
- Signed on to the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#)
- Initiated a Climate Emergency resolution with unanimous city council support.
- I initiated a Green House Gas Inventory as city councilperson in 2019, which was completed in the spring of 2020. This baseline data is critical to achieving the city's first-ever climate action plan and helps set a science-based target by 2030 and 2050.
- In 2021, the city is developing a climate action plan concurrently with the city's master plan update and the parks and recreation plan. This project is currently underway.
- The city was awarded a spot in ICLEI's technical city cohort to help develop an effective climate action strategy.

As Mayor, ICLEI invites me to recruit other US mayors to join the Race to Zero campaign as one of the smallest cities in size and population to set a carbon-neutral goal within ICELI USA's municipal network. In my spare time, I try to educate and encourage Metro Detroit mayors to set a carbon-neutral goal and join me as a voice in the regional effort to reduce GHGs.

Ferndale's community-wide GHG inventory results show that the city's building assets, waste, and transportation are the highest emitters of GHG. The city administration and council are addressing each area through policy, planning, investment, and implementation.

Where do you see Ferndale in twenty years?

A fun question because no one can predict the future! In reflection on the past 12 years I've been on council, the top issue impacting our tax rate, how our local government functions, its services, and how they are delivered has been shaped by how the state inadequately funds municipalities. When newer residents view their tax bill for the first time and wonder why their taxes are so high, the root cause is that our tax system does not work for communities.

I encourage residents to learn how the state disinvests in local government by visiting www.savemycity.org. The [Michigan Municipal League](#) advocates with the legislature on behalf of communities find solutions to the negative impacts of Headlee and Proposal A.

Another great resource to learn about this issue is the [Citizens Research Council of Michigan](#), a nonpartisan policy research organization. They published a new report, "[Michigan's Overlapping Property Tax Limitations Create an Unsustainable Municipal Finance System](#)" that explains the profound challenges facing our local governments. In summary,

"The property tax system is not sustainable. Local government tax revenues are constrained in their growth unless they add new development to their tax bases or increase tax rates. Land is finite and cannot continue to be developed. Tax rates are statutorily limited. Local governments need revenue that can grow with their economies."

Looking ahead to 2041 just a few things that came to mind:

Headlee/Proposal A Fixes Made

The unstable municipal finance system is now stable soon, and cities have more options to raise revenue to offer residents' services. I keep my fingers cross this will happen in the 2020s instead of the late 2030s.

More Kids & Families

The 2020 US Census demographics for Ferndale indicate fewer kids and more single-person households. Fewer children living in our community are already having an impact on the school district but it will continue to have an impact on parks and recreation, and programming. Our Kulick Community Center needs significant repair and is underutilized because it is originally a school. I envision a modern building specifically serving kids and families, and we have partnerships with other organizations providing enrichment classes and opportunities for our residents.

Carbon Neutral Goals

In 2020, the city council set carbon neutrality goals by 2030, 2040, and 2050. According to our science-based targets, the city needs to reduce its greenhouse gases by 62% through city-owned assets and community-wide. In twenty years, residents and future elected officials have prioritized investments to achieve these goals, while working with our adjacent city partners and regional partners.

Mobility & Transportation Advancements

The city will have adequate electric vehicle infrastructure to support the transition from gas-powered cars to electric and autonomous. Our downtown sidewalks will have technology embedded in them to speak with autonomous vehicles and electronic delivery devices (aka: deliver robots). How the city manages its curbs will shift from parked cars to better on-time management for deliveries, passenger pick-ups, car sharing, ride hailing, bus rapid transit stations and parking. MDOT will lead Woodward Avenue reconstruction installing wider sidewalks, adding more street trees and more green infrastructure. The median will become more narrow to allow all the people-focused sidewalk elements and autonomous vehicle lanes that will reflect the roads of the future. The region will have solved the inadequate funding for a better regional transit system.