

## Lincoln Chamber City Council Questionnaire Responses - Stan Parker

### **1. The city is a large and complex organization; tell us about your experience and how it has prepared you to successfully oversee city operations.**

I have spent my career leading and managing an organization with broad, complex responsibilities, including overseeing teams, budgets, and strategic initiatives. As a leader of a nonprofit organization, I have worked with diverse stakeholders, managed financial stewardship with limited resources, and built systems of accountability. I also provide leadership coaching to the executive leadership teams of other organizations, helping them develop clear operational priorities, effective decision-making structures, and high-functioning collaboration.

City government operates under the same principles—setting clear priorities, stewarding resources wisely, and ensuring transparency and accountability. My experience leading teams, making data-informed decisions, and fostering consensus among diverse groups will serve Lincoln well in overseeing city operations efficiently and effectively.

### **2. Lincoln is a growing and vibrant community with citizens engaged in varied interests and pursuits; how will you bring disparate groups together to build consensus? How will you set a standard for civility?**

Lincoln thrives when people from all walks of life feel heard and included. My leadership philosophy is built on service, stewardship, and solidarity—a commitment to listening, leading with integrity, and rejecting divisive partisanship in favor of collaboration.

Bringing people together requires:

- Intentional Listening – Engaging with residents, business leaders, and community groups to understand concerns and find common ground.
- Transparency & Communication – Making sure discussions are open, data-driven, and focused on solving real issues rather than political posturing.
- Civility by Example – Maintaining respect, even in disagreement, and fostering an expectation that all voices are valued in the decision-making process.

By promoting constructive dialogue and focusing on shared solutions, we can build a culture where Lincoln's future is shaped by unity, not division.

### **3. In 2019, voters approved an increase in the local option sales tax to help finance Lincoln's streets infrastructure needs. Since then, the ¼ cent sales tax has raised over \$85 million. Do you support the renewal of the ¼ cent sales tax for street improvements?**

As I've spoken with community members and business leaders, I've heard a consistent theme: hesitant approval of the quarter-cent sales tax—more out of resignation than enthusiasm. The concern isn't necessarily about the tax itself, but about the underlying issue: the lack of confidence that streets will be properly prioritized in the city budget without it. That's a problem.

I support continuing the tax because infrastructure is critical to Lincoln's future, and we need well-maintained roads to support residents, businesses, and economic growth. However, my biggest question remains: After six years, why isn't it more obvious that this is the best and only option for improving our streets? If this tax has been truly effective, we should see clearer outcomes, broader community confidence, and a more defined long-term vision for infrastructure funding.

Lincoln deserves more than short-term fixes. We need a sustainable, transparent plan that ensures infrastructure funding isn't reliant on temporary measures but is a clear, ongoing priority. That means proactively engaging the public, making the budgeting process clearer, and ensuring that infrastructure investments align with the city's long-term needs. I believe we can do better in creating a system where people don't feel forced into supporting a tax out of fear, but rather because they trust in a well-planned, well-communicated, and effective strategy for maintaining and improving our streets.

**4. The Chamber's position on affordable housing is that supply must be increased to maintain affordability. The Chamber believes investing in housing of all types (high density, single-family, downtown, new growth, etc.) is key. As a City Council member, how will you prioritize more housing supply in Lincoln?**

Housing affordability is a supply-and-demand challenge, and I support increasing Lincoln's housing stock through a balanced, "Yes, and" approach:

- Streamline Permitting & Zoning – Reducing bureaucratic delays to make it easier for developers to build.
- Expand Mixed-Use & Infill Development – Encouraging diverse housing options in established neighborhoods and downtown areas.
- Strategic Infrastructure Investment – Ensuring growth areas have the roads, utilities, and services needed to support expansion.
- Public-Private Partnerships – Working with developers, nonprofits, and investors to support workforce housing initiatives.

By making it easier to build, Lincoln can expand its housing inventory while maintaining affordability and quality of life.

**5. How can the City Council more effectively exercise oversight and accountability related to development services in Lincoln? How can we get a "yes" attitude?**

The development process should be predictable, efficient, and collaborative. To foster a "yes" attitude while maintaining accountability, the City Council should:

- Make Processes Clear & Efficient – Developers should know upfront what's expected, with faster approvals for projects that meet city standards.
- Prioritize Customer Service in Government – City staff should see developers as partners in growth rather than obstacles to manage.
- Use Metrics to Track Progress – Set measurable goals for approval timelines, customer feedback, and project completion rates.

It was deeply concerning to hear a builder exclaim recently, 'I feel like we are the enemy!' and another businessman express, 'Lincoln fights growth!'

A pro-growth, business-friendly approach doesn't mean removing accountability—it does mean making “yes” the starting point, not an exception.

**6. Even if Lincoln on the Move is renewed, Lincoln's need for street and road infrastructure will grow. Some communities use financing tools like SIDs, while others allocate a greater portion of their general funds. As a City Council member, how would you support augmenting Lincoln's total street investment?**

Investing in Lincoln's roads must be a long-term strategy, not just a temporary fix. I would support a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- Exploring Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) – Targeted funding for high-growth areas.
- Leveraging State & Federal Infrastructure Grants – Seeking external funding sources to reduce the local tax burden.
- Aligning Growth with Infrastructure Investment – Ensuring that as Lincoln expands, infrastructure investment keeps pace with development.
- Public-Private Partnerships – Working with businesses and developers to co-invest in key infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure is a core investment, not an expense—and we need to fund it in ways that keep Lincoln's economy moving forward.

**7. One of the most important functions of the City Council is to review and approve the bi-annual budget and property tax rate. The Chamber recognizes the challenge of balancing needs with fiscal responsibility. In recent years, the city budget has increased significantly. Do you consider this rate of growth to be sustainable? How will you work with businesses and property owners to limit budget growth and property tax increases?**

Sustainable budgeting requires discipline, transparency, and accountability. While investments in public safety, infrastructure, and services are essential, a budget that outpaces household income growth places undue strain on residents and businesses.

To keep spending aligned with community priorities, I would support:

- Implementing Zero-Based Budgeting Principles – Ensuring every dollar spent is justified, not just carried over.
- Regularly Assessing City Programs – Cutting inefficiencies and prioritizing high-impact investments.
- Capping Property Tax Growth – Seeking alternative revenue streams and spending controls to limit increases.
- Engaging Businesses & Residents in Budget Planning – Ensuring fiscal decisions reflect the community's needs, not just government expansion.

Lincoln's economic strength depends on responsible financial stewardship. We must prioritize spending that maximizes value while respecting taxpayers.