

Andria Archer – Platforms at the Podium

1. Do you think our main street/downtown is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that? If yes, why?

I do think our Main Street is successful and healthy, however I also think that it is fragile. I have been very involved Downtown, it's where I live, I work with the farmers' market, I am involved with the Last Friday events. I have even worked part-time jobs with a couple businesses on Main Street. So I have had the opportunity to frequently work with the business owners Downtown. And a historic downtown like ours has a set of unique challenges. The buildings are older and constructed long before the modern codes requiring things like parking spaces and setback requirements. So there are challenges for the business owners in that sense, how to get people in and out of their storefronts, how to fit a modern business into an older space. Then there is the additional obstacle of luring people in, getting people to come and shop and eat somewhere off of the main roads. As for what I would do about this, I would first of all continue my work with the events I am already a part of, we are always promoting and advocating for the Downtown area. And second, I would turn to the Comprehensive Growth Plan. The growth plan describes the downtown area as an economic engine, and I like that phrase. There is an energy associated with a thriving downtown that benefits the whole community. It makes Clayton more of a destination, which is good for our businesses. And it adds to our quality of life, with unique options for shopping and dining for those of us who live and work here. But we do need improvements, things like street maintenance, sidewalk improvements, etc.

To use a specific example from the Growth Plan, we should consider changes to the development review and permitting process to encourage property owners, developers, Town staff, citizens and the Town Council to work together to find solutions to the challenges facing businesses operating in a historic area. For example, our current permitting process requires a site plan for outdoor seating. This is the same level of detail required with a complete redevelopment. There are alternative processes we should consider that would allow minor changes like outdoor seating to be more easily attainable.

Another idea from the Growth Plan is to review Town ordinances and figure out specifically what barriers are in the way of redeveloping existing structures and sites downtown. Stormwater and parking requirements are two such barriers that come to mind. Solutions to both of those may lie in public/private partnerships. We should look for opportunities to partner, and to use parking as an example, this could include the study of new surface parking lots, improvements to existing lots, and/or what it would take to make a parking deck viable. We could also revisit formalizing parking and redevelopment along the railroad.

We also need to update our Downtown Master Plan. It should address reshaping Main Street in ways that make it more pedestrian friendly. There are things we could do to make Main Street more walkable, more inviting. And when it's more alive, it's more economically viable. We could even look at incentivizing proposed redevelopments that use their upper stories for residential uses, which would increase residential density and the around-the-clock presence of people downtown, adding to its vitality and character.

2. How do you feel about the transportation options currently available in our town? Do we have enough options? If not, what will you do to increase those?

Our transportation options are limited. Even driving a car is becoming more difficult with our increasing traffic. Many of our streets don't have sidewalks or crosswalk signals, and biking can be risky. We clearly need to keep working on transportation. To increase our options, I would start by following through on what our draft Growth Plan calls a "Mobility Plan." It would address mass transit options, connected greenways, and on-road bicycle opportunities just to name a few things.

In terms of mass transit, Clayton needs to start making a specific plan right now for the possibility of being on the Triangle Commuter Rail. That plan should include possible locations for a station, as well as consider having that station serve as a hub for additional options like rapid busses and Amtrak. It should also include a specific plan for exactly when and how we are going to regularly communicate with NCDOT Rail Division and North Carolina Railroad so that we are consistent with them and stay engaged. We need to continue and build on our partnerships with GoTriangle and Johnston County Area Transit System to set up bus services, like Bus Rapid Transit. Bus service opportunities with CAMPO should also be top priority.

For biking and walking options, we need an updated Bike and Pedestrian Network Map for Clayton that identifies where to connect to regional networks as well as local destinations like schools, parks, greenways and shopping areas. Another resource that I would like to learn more about is the NCDOT Complete Streets policy. Complete streets prioritize sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and safe crossings that include crosswalks with activated signals where traffic signals exist. According to NCDOT, by 2030 nearly half the state's population will be in age ranges where driving is either not an option or a diminishing option. If we start taking the steps I outlined now, someday we will have transportation options that serve the needs of all citizens, including the growing population of people who do not or cannot drive or own a car. These options also have economic and tourism benefits.

3. There is a public perception that traffic is a problem. How would you address a citizen about their concerns over traffic?

In my opinion, traffic is a problem and it's a difficult one to resolve. We will continue to have traffic problems for several years to come. Many of our traffic solutions are part of plans with target completion dates that are years away. When an area is attractive and growing like ours, traffic and schools are always playing catch-up.

In question #2, I addressed transportation options other than driving and that is an important part of helping alleviate traffic. In addition to that, the Town needs to continue all the things it is already doing to chip away at the traffic problem, such as: continue to communicate with NCDOT about their share of Clayton roads and partner with CAMPO whenever possible to fund projects. I would also maintain regular contact with the County so that we have a solid relationship when it comes time for joint plans and partnerships. I would also advocate for a county-wide transportation plan which could create an additional funding source if it included a county-level transportation enhancement fund. All of these partnerships require consistent communication and steady completion of all the big and small action items it generates. I am good at follow-through and tracking and I would be following up to verify that we are accomplishing this.

What else can we do? As a Councilmember I would also verify with the Town Manager that we have adequate personnel to make progress and complete action steps for the many transportation plans that are already underway or in the planning phases. We need highly-qualified people answering on behalf of Clayton, tracking progress on all short- and long-range plans, and seeking new and creative funding opportunities. If we don't, if we need to add an additional position to make real progress, then that would be my top priority.

Next, I would again lean on what our draft Growth Plan calls a "Mobility Plan." We need a comprehensive organized approach to transportation specific to this Town. Part of that could be studying potential roadway connections for new collector streets to relieve traffic. We could also add requirements to our Town codes for all new developments, that require preserving right-of-ways so they can be used for widening and new location roads. For new developments, we could also require improvements like widenings, intersection improvements, and turn

lanes as part of the Traffic Impact Assessment process. Yes, this is a complicated issue, because adding those requirements adds to the cost of development, and we do want to be careful not to lose housing affordability, but I would like us to get creative and see if there is a middle ground here.

Traffic is a problem that is not going away, so we need to take action NOW on as many fronts as possible, many of which I outlined here. I would love the opportunity to use my skills and knowledge to do that on your Town Council.

4. There have been discussions that the current development review process is broken and needs to be modified or replaced. As a Councilmember, how would you weigh into this issue to determine what policies and procedures need to be reviewed?

Through my work with the Planning Board, I have heard there are concerns with this process. It sounds like there are several issues going on. I have heard from the development community that the process takes too long and that the goal post is always moving. I have heard from the staff side that second drafts come in with major changes that require additional review and that the pace of submittals is hard to keep up with. As a Council member, I would weigh into this issue first and foremost by talking to the constituents who are being affected, whether it's a frustrated landowner or developer. I would drill down to the nitty gritty of what their hang-ups with this process are. Then I would take those concerns to the Town Manager, and get staff expertise on the issues. After that I would want to work with Town management and my fellow Council members to identify goals and reach consensus about benchmarks or deadlines for the Town Manager to work toward. We would also want continued feedback from the affected constituents along the way, hopefully as the process improves. I really see this an opportunity for collaboration. I think it's about having the right mindset, and finding a way to work toward a common goal, instead of pitting sides against each other.

5. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process in our town?

What has worked the best for me in terms of getting my fellow residents involved in decision-making is being involved in the Town myself. When I am out and about, working and playing alongside other residents, eventually their concerns and ideas about the Town will come up. I encourage these conversations and I can handle criticisms and complaints. Usually I can identify a step for them to take toward resolving an issue, or do some research about their issue and report back to them. There have also been times when I have taken action on their behalf, sometimes something as simple as an email or phone call to the right person.

I think this one-on-one engagement is the most important step. People need to see that someone actually listens and cares about their concerns. When they don't feel that, it makes it easier for them give up and disengage. When constituents can't relate to the people in office, when they feel like all they hear is "no," they are much less likely to engage in a productive manner. Sometimes it takes the simplest act of listening to light a fire in a person and next thing you know they are joining a committee or volunteering at an event. Because of that, I plan to stay involved in my activities in Town and encourage conversations with the residents who cross my path.

There are also ways to make the Town's actual decision-making processes more accessible; for example, broadcasting public meetings online. This makes it much easier for people to tune in when they are able. I would like to explore more opportunities for increasing that accessibility like streamlining some aspects of the Town website and making documents like agenda packets more user-friendly.

I would also like to expand on something the Town already does a pretty good job with: identifying more formal opportunities for public input via steering committees. This allows for people who are really motivated by one particular issue to really dig in and work with it in a structured and in-depth way. I personally have been part of two steering committees in Town and both were great experiences. We had access to relevant information and materials, and

regular time with Town staff who went out of the way to encourage our input (even when we had ideas that were maybe a little too far-fetched).

6. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the town any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

I am probably the most boring person in the world to answer this question, because first and foremost my preference would be something practical. But I would overcome my thrifty mom tendencies, hit the streets, and find out what the Clayton people think should be done. I could gather ideas by word of mouth, social media posts, and email out a survey. The resulting list could be prioritized, and I could put the money toward the most urgent need facing the Town at that time.

If public input wasn't an option, I would stick with my practical instincts and look for a sidewalk in an underserved area of Town, fix one of our troubled intersections, or extend a few of our busiest turn lanes. I would even consider putting the money toward paying off the wastewater treatment plant to alleviate the costs being put on citizens, but unfortunately \$1 million wouldn't go very far with that. If all the really urgent practical things were under control, I would put the money toward a skate park or a parking solution for Downtown Clayton. Skate parks have many unique benefits to youth and adults, as well as proven financial impacts on local economies through increased tourism and recreation spending. In terms of downtown parking, there is a new Town committee trying to find solutions to that problem and I've heard some great ideas. One is better signs, directing people who don't know the Town well to the places where there is parking. Maybe even signs with QR codes on them so users can scan them into a phone and get fast access to all kinds of information. Last but not least, I could always use the money as an incentive for Chick-fil-A, since one voter has already promised to vote for me if I can get one built here.

7. What neighborhood do you live in? Where are your favorite places to spend time in our Town?

I live near Clayton High School, on Fayetteville Street. The neighborhood is a great mix of people of all ages, backgrounds, and walks of life. There is a real feeling of community; sometimes I can't believe how lucky I am to have landed there. My awesome neighbors have helped me with all sorts of things in the four years I've lived there. I think they know how much I care about them and this Town. A few have even brought specific concerns to me at various times. And I love that, I am always grateful for a chance to give back to them.

My favorite place to spend time is hands-down at our farmers' market (haha a shameless plug, I know!) It is held every Saturday at Horne Square. The ever-growing number of farmers, artists, and artisans is so much fun. I am thrilled that our Town is showing up for local talent and agriculture that way. I also enjoy all the various events we have in Town, like concerts and holiday activities; parades and charity events. Like many people, one of the first things I loved about this Town was the historic downtown. That area continues to get more interesting as businesses come in and add to the atmosphere. I enjoy all the shops and dining there. Speaking of dining, I love food and when I do eat out I like to try cuisines that are not the typical stuff I grew up with, so I'll also share my favorite restaurants on Highway 70: Jamaica Bites and Caribbean Delight. With unique restaurants like these and others, Clayton has a lot more variety than people may initially think. I am so grateful that I ended up living here!

8. What is your thought/plan or steps will you take to keep Clayton's "Small-Town Charm" while we continue to grow?

What EXACTLY does "small-town charm" mean? What does that phrase make you think of? For some, it relates to the overall size of Clayton, keeping the population small enough to classify it as a "small town." For others, it might mean that the areas just outside of Town are rural or agricultural; that there are traffic-free back roads and undeveloped tracts of land. For some, it could be the historic area of Downtown Clayton and the people and places you find here as opposed to a bigger city. To me, the idea of maintaining our "small-town charm" is a bit of a puzzle - but it's a puzzle I would love to work on. Here is where I would start: our draft comprehensive growth plan. The writing process for it included surveys and here were the residents' main concerns, several of which relate directly to our small-town charm:

- Concern over growth (side effects on traffic and school capacity)
- Concern about preservation of natural resources (clear-cutting during development)
- Desire for sidewalk connectivity
- Desire for public internet
- Desire for recreation and activities
- Desire for access to retail (small scale and big box)
- Concern that housing options don't fit all types of housing demand
- Desire for a safe community
- Desire for affordability

Fortunately there are specific steps to address all of these in our Draft growth plan. As I have stated in my answers to other questions, my top targets would be traffic, residential development densities, and parks/greenways development. If you choose me to represent you on our Town Council, I will take that plan seriously, and push to implement its recommendations. With that you will see progress and you will feel like small-town charm is being preserved.

I also wanted to point out some additional "small-town charm" qualities I found in online discussions of Clayton:

- Small boutique shops

- Unique restaurants
- Walkable
- Charming downtown buildings
- Quaint neighborhoods
- Small-town events
- Parks
- Recreation facilities

For many of these, we have plans currently in the works, and for others there are action steps in our growth plan. What you need now is someone organized and hard-working to make this a priority. Clayton's "small-town charm" is important, there are steps we need to take to maintain it, and I would love to be the one to do that on your Town Council.

9. Are you for or against tax increases to improve the transportation infrastructure in order to make it easier and faster for people to travel for work and play? Why or why not?

This is an issue I can see both sides of, and it would take a lot more information than what is presented in this question for me to say which side I'd support personally or as an elected leader.

No one likes a tax increase, and that goes for me, too. I would first exhaust all other avenues to improve transportation infrastructure, and that includes getting creative with the money we already have and looking outside the box at towns similar to Clayton to see if they're coming up with anything innovative. Part of what has attracted people to Clayton is that it is a relatively affordable place to live. I would not want to add more of a financial burden.

More importantly, before I voted yay or nay on ANY kind of tax increase, I would gather lots of feedback from Town residents about how they view the situation. In the case of transportation infrastructure, there actually could be many residents in favor of paying more taxes for that, depending on the size of the tax increase and how far it would go toward resolving our traffic issues. I would make sure we found ways to collect this feedback from residents, whether online via surveys or in-person by holding public input sessions. I would want the resulting information to be organized logically and shared publicly. Then, if a vote did come before me, I would be sure to outline the pros and cons of the vote I cast.

I say more about my approach to transportation issues in questions #2 and #3.

10. How will you, as a Councilmember, ensure that you're following best practices for Council/staff interactions, for introduction of new items onto Council agendas, and for leadership recruitment and evaluation?

I am glad the question included the words "best practices" because that phrase refers to "the professional procedures that are accepted as being correct and most effective," and that is how I would want to behave as a councilmember. On the Planning Board, I had the chance to complete some training offered by the UNC School of Government - a nonpartisan organization that helps public officials and citizens understand local government. I learned a lot from that training, and it opened my eyes to the world of training resources out there for local government officials. It is important for you to know that I am not an expert on all the legislative aspects of being a Councilmember, and actually - I think that is great! I am motivated to get out there, learn, and keep you informed along the way - not rest on a business-as-usual mentality. There are protocols for how Council interacts with staff and how to introduce items onto an agenda; I intend to learn and abide by them. My approach is to follow a chain-of-command when it comes to Town staff interactions, and I spell that out in my answer to question #16. It is not that I don't want to be approachable by staff or anyone else, but I know that taking my items directly to staff without working through the Town Manager is not a best practice. In addition to that, based on my planning board experience, I prefer introducing items during the meetings, a public forum. That way the public knows who is bringing a particular issue up and the reasoning behind it. For leadership recruitment and evaluation, I need more information about what the current best practice is. I know in the past the Town has hired a consultant to recruit for the Town Manager position. If that is what it takes to recruit and hire the best talent, then I would advocate for that. A bad hire can cost the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

11. If elected, what would be your main priority for the Town of Clayton?

I have a handful of top priorities that all feel important, but to answer the question and pick my “main priority” I would say that I hope to be on the Council when the next Town Manager position is filled. I would ensure we have a fair and professional interview process. I want to make sure we have the very best leadership in place to address the strains of rapid growth in our community.

Next up, as most of us know, the Town is currently constructing the Neuse River Water Reclamation Facility, a huge project. I want to make sure it is on track for successful completion in the most fiscally-responsible way possible. As a resident watching that process unfold over the past couple years, it has led me to wonder about the status of all our infrastructure. Are we in good shape for the future? What kind of long-term planning can we do now to avoid big and costly surprises? Getting the answers to those questions is a top priority.

And of course, a topic that has come up throughout all these questions: the Town is nearing completion of a Comprehensive Growth plan. Prioritizing, budgeting for, and implementing those recommendations is another top priority.

To accomplish these priorities and others, we need strong leadership in our Council. We need councilmembers who work hard, show up prepared, collaborate, and represent the voices of all the people in our Town. I would love to do that for you on your Town Council.

12. The recreation bond and the projects it was to implement hasn't received much attention and is rarely discussed publicly. Do you know where it stands, what has been implemented, and what is left to do?

It did appear that the recreation bond went through a phase where no progress was being made. Some residents I have spoken with have said there was behind-the-scenes work going on that doesn't usually make headlines, so that may be part of why we weren't hearing a lot about it. Also, in the time since the bond was approved, Covid happened, and that slowed many things down. We also had a change in the Town manager role, and getting new leadership established and up and running can also slow down a process. I know some residents who are very involved with the parks and recreation department said that when Town leadership changed, many of the plans that were already underway were also changed. As a Councilmember, I would hold myself accountable for following up on timelines for projects like these. When leadership gives clear direction and deadlines, staff can respond - and if for some reason staff doesn't respond, they can be held accountable in a professional and productive way. Progress on big initiatives goes hand-in-hand with attention to detail, commitment, and prioritization from the Council.

I do know progress has been made recently. From what I understand, there are currently design and build plans approved for two parks. In addition, it sounds like the Town is working with the State Treasurer's Office, the local government commission, to get the bonds sold. So, for the short term, hopefully the plans for municipal park are done by Spring of 2022. As for what's left to do, there were many goals that were part of the bond proposal, but we will have to wait and see how much money will be available after the current projects are completed.

13. How will you support town plans for improvements in cultural offerings (from departments like the Clayton Center and Library, as well as from the DDA, Public Arts Advisory Board, etc.)?

Clayton is recognized and an arts and culture event destination. We have so many great events and great organizations hosting activities, it makes our Town attractive and improves our quality of life. It also attracts visitors so there is an economic benefit there as well.

For starters, I would encourage Town collaboration with the Clayton Visual Arts, the Public Arts Advisory Board, and the Downtown Development association. These groups have the passion and vision that bring life to Clayton's culture.

I was also happy to see that our Growth Plan has an entire section about cultural offerings with all kinds of actions steps we can prioritize and chip away at. One of those was expanding the number and type of public art displays which are owned and maintained by the Town. We can do that by getting creative and looking for public and private funding opportunities for public art. The plan also mentioned developing a more targeted marketing strategy that celebrates Clayton as a destination for arts and culture.

I would also make sure that the other organizations mentioned in the question, like the Library and Clayton Center, continue to be a priority in the Town budget. These are staples of our well-rounded Town. Libraries in particular have always been important cultural institutions since they reach such a broad population and provide so many services to the community. I have heard several times from residents, particularly it seems for those with school-age children, that we need a larger library, so I'd love the opportunity to explore that possibility as well.

14.How will you remain accessible to the public *after* the election?

There are a few ways I will remain accessible to the public after the election. I will stay involved in the Town the way I have been for years now, a regular person working and volunteering and talking with everyone who crosses my path. I would continue to find ways to interact with my fellow residents so that they know I am approachable, and I care about their everyday challenges with our Town. I would of course be sure to answer all emails and phone calls, something I am already accustomed to doing in my roles with the Planning Board and Farmers' Market. I would continue to share information on social media. And I would like to add that in question #5 I shared my ideas for involving fellow residents in decision-making processes of the Town and several of those would help with accessibility also.

15. What are your top priorities for your term as a Council member? How do you plan to introduce your priorities to staff to make sure they move forward?

I outline my top priorities in question #11.

I explain my methodology for interacting with Town staff in questions #10 and #16. In summary, the Council should set public policy and establish community priorities and not get deep into operations. The roles and responsibilities of Council and staff should be clearly communicated, and both should stay in their lanes. There should be joint efforts to improve processes, and action plans and follow-up dates are critical. I am not an expert on all the legislative aspects of being a Councilmember, and I think that is great! I am motivated to learn and keep you informed along the way - not rest on a business-as-usual mentality. There are protocols for how Council interacts with staff and how to introduce items onto an agenda; I intend to learn and abide by them. My approach is to follow a chain-of-command when it comes to Town staff interactions.

16. Do you think Town Council has a role in in the development review process? Why?

Just as with most any process handled by Town employees, the Council has a role. What is debatable though is what that role should be. I'm going to use this question to illuminate the way I view the relationship between a Council and the Town employees. And I am not reinventing the wheel here either; there is plenty of good literature out there about the optimal relationship between these two. I believe in balance. Here's a viewpoint I lifted from a local government website: when a Council "snoopervises" staff or gets deep into operations, OR when staff sets public policy and establishes community priorities, the role of each entity gets blurry. This can set up a vicious cycle of eroding trust that kills teamwork. The problem gets worse when Council members go behind the rest of Council and attempt to personally direct staff. This increases conflict between Council and staff and leaves everyone frustrated and confused. Good leadership should bring Town staff and Council together by clarifying Council-staff roles and responsibilities and then staying in the right lane. There should be joint efforts to review and assess processes and all implementation should happen with action plans and follow-up dates.

To go back to the development review part of the question, it is staff's job to deal with the intricacies of that process, and high-quality professionals should be working in those positions. The Council should also be budgeting and advocating for staff training, in leadership and content areas. Investing in high-quality employees is an investment in better operations. The Council can also specifically help the development review process by moving forward with the UDC update so the codes are clearer and modernized. I also touched on some more specifics about the development review process in question #4.

17. Departmental requests for staffing are discussed with every budget cycle. Are you concerned with the staffing levels in any departments? Why?

I only have access to public information about staffing, unlike current Council members, but I will base my answer on the specifics I am aware of.

I know from my work on the Planning Board that staffing in the Planning Department is a concern; at the time of this writing, there is one employee. I am concerned about that. I also know during a meeting about the Growth Plan it was mentioned that Clayton may need to hire more emergency services personnel to maintain adequate response times. I am not sure if these were only fire department positions or included the police department, but I am sure that as our population grows we will need additional staff to meet those needs and as a Councilmember I would make sure we are prioritizing and budgeting for proper staffing levels.

Overall, as a Councilmember I would be asking the Town Manager what staffing concerns there are and requesting appropriate data to justify creating new positions. Most importantly, the Council is responsible for hiring the Town Manager position. I would absolutely want to do my due diligence with that process since a bad hire can set the Town back hundreds of thousands of dollars.

18. As a Council member, how will you work with NCDOT and Johnston County schools to address traffic and school capacity issues?

Traffic and school crowding are the issues I have heard the most about from people in Clayton. Roads and schools are always playing catch up. Any region experiencing this level of growth is dealing with these issues. I have heard so many times that there's very little we can do as a Town to deal with these issues, since they are largely under county or state-level control. However, I would try hard to do what is possible.

To address schools, I would encourage someone from the county public school system to attend TRC meetings, the meetings that take place to approve new development. They need to know what sort of growth is coming so that they can plan. If they are unable to commit to that, I would request a monthly or quarterly meeting with the school superintendent or facilities management so that I could keep Clayton on the radar as well as keep them informed of what development we have in the pipeline. I would also look for collaboration with developers who want to donate land for school construction. I have never had the opportunity to be directly involved with that process, but I have heard about two specific instances where developers attempted to donate land for school construction and were turned away. I'm sure there is a lot of background involved with that sort of thing, but I would do whatever I could to foster communication and partnership. I learned at last month's Planning Board meeting that the county school system is implementing a new way to track projected attendance numbers and it sounds like that could really help. Whether I am elected or not I intend to find out more about that process. We need to be more proactive in reaching out to the county officials who make these decisions.

For traffic issues, this question asks specifically about NCDOT. I am not aware of anything else we could do to work with them. We already have council members who sit on various boards and committees, and Town staff who are engaged with ongoing and upcoming projects. Unfortunately the NCDOT is always in need of more funding and always dealing with the highest priority roads with the money it does have. Luckily NCDOT is not the only source for solutions to Clayton's traffic. In question #2, I addressed alternate transportation methods (other than driving) that are a very important part of alleviating traffic. In question #3, I listed the

things I would continue doing, or do better, to address our traffic and I threw in some new ideas, too. I also specifically addressed how I would try to work with the County on regional transportation issues.

19. The Town is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Growth Plan. If elected, how will you make sure the goals of the plan are implemented.

I have mentioned the draft Comprehensive Growth Plan in many of my answers here. I am on the Growth Plan Steering Committee and I have enjoyed it so much because I have gotten to watch concrete, actionable ideas for almost every problem currently facing our Town take shape. The last chapter of the Growth Plan is a list that identifies the top priorities. This list is somewhat subjective because, of course, anyone who reads it would have a unique opinion and perspective about what our top priorities should be. Your opinions and perspectives about it can and should be voiced with our Town Council, and I would love to be on that Council to receive those comments. Though we do not have a final draft as of this writing, I do believe the list will resonate with most citizens. It will include specific steps that can be taken for each area of concern, as well as project the costs associated with each step. To implement the Growth Plan, I envision meetings that include Council and Town management to create action plans and deadlines that are then presented for public feedback. Once the action plans are solidified, I would pull my weight on the Council to track progress, make adjustments, make difficult budget decisions, and keep the public informed of progress. I can appreciate the magnitude of this plan, and the work that its implementation will require, because I have been involved in the process. I am ready and eager to put my skills to work to make it happen.

20. The Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Clayton collaborate on several projects and programs that benefit the business community and residents of Clayton. How should the Town Council foster and support this relationship?

This event tonight is a good example of how the Chamber and the Town can support each other. This sort of thing, making Town government available to the public, is great. In fact, I want to point something out - and maybe everyone listening knows this - but: a chamber of commerce is not part of the Town government. It's an organization of business owners and entrepreneurs in a community. It's a way for them to join together and have a louder voice. I have worked with many businesses in Town who are members of our Chamber. They appreciated the opportunity to collaborate and work with others who share the same challenges and have similar goals. So the Chamber's job is to advocate for its membership. This relationship with local businesses allows the Chamber to gather valuable details about important issues facing the membership in an up-close way that the Town government isn't able to do. If I was on the Council, I would want an open line of communication with the Chamber as a great source of information about the good, bad and ugly that its membership is dealing with. A strong and healthy Chamber is important to a prosperous Town. I'll share an example: our Chamber hosts a bus tour that drives residents around Town and points out all the good things about Clayton. At the farmers' market on several occasions we have had new customers show up and say they heard about us on the bus tour. That is a small but powerful drop in the bucket of the kinds of grassroots community outreach a healthy Chamber can provide. I value the mission of the Chamber of Commerce and its insights. Thank you to the Clayton Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event tonight.