

2019 Candidates for Charlotte City Council: Voter Guide

District	Name	Party	In December of 2018, City Council unanimously adopted the Strategic Energy Action Plan as a framework to transition Charlotte to a low-carbon future. SEAP is an ambitious plan with aggressive goals for 2030 and 2050 that has set Charlotte on the path to becoming a globally recognized leader in sustainability and resiliency. What is the importance of this plan to you and how will you ensure its goals are met in the coming years?	In 2018, Charlotte had a record high 28 pedestrian fatalities and four bicycle fatalities. The city developed a Vision Zero Action Plan last year and is now working to implement it with the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. What investments and actions do you believe are most important for Charlotte to fulfill its commitment to Vision Zero and ensure that our streets are safe and well-connected for people who walk, bike, and ride transit?	The city is creating the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan to guide how the city grows and how investments are made, as well as a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to update the policies and regulations that guide growth and development. What is City Council's role in ensuring that the Comprehensive Plan and UDO support the sustainability of Charlotte's built environment?	Last year CATS updated the 2030 Transit Plan and is now preparing to begin a Regional Transit Study that encompasses 10 counties and the urbanized area in South Carolina. According to a study published this month, our transit system was ranked 97th out of the 100 largest systems. What role should the city play in expanding the transit network, improving the frequency of service, and coordinating Charlotte's role in planning for regional transit across county lines?	A recent assessment showed that Charlotte is not on track to meet its goal of boosting the tree canopy to 50 percent by 2050. Why is a robust, healthy tree canopy important to Charlotte and what steps should the city take to meet its goal?
At Large	Braxton Winston II	D	Climate change is the most important threat that faces us whether it be on the local, county, state, national, or international spectrum. Government can affect climate change at all levels of policy and governance. I was proud to support the SEAP process and its passing. I continue to push staff to implement and update departmental policy that will bring us in line with our goals. I believe the three biggest areas the City of Charlotte can directly focus on to reduce our impact on climate change are: Fleet, Buildings, and Infrastructure Investments. By eliminating vehicles that rely on fossil fuels, we can have an incredible impact on emissions. If we lead on this, we set the example for other governments around us as well as other business entities that rely on vehicle fleets. Our government relies on structures all over the city. We must ensure that all of our buildings, those existing and under construction, are reaching the highest level of sustainability and exploring emerging technologies to help innovate what is constructed in our city. New investments in clean energy brings new demands to the workforce. Emerging technologies will call for new skill sets. We must ensure that green workforce development is happening in our most vulnerable areas. We look through an equity lens when building capacity for green economies in our city. I believe our greatest ability to effect climate change as a City is to consider how we push infrastructure investments and strategies over the next generation. In our Comprehensive 2040 plan we must prioritize building residential areas in close proximity to jobs and services. We have to plan on building a less auto-centric living environment. We must continue the efforts of our city departments like solid waste to lead on building a circular economy. We should continue to scale Charlotte Water's efforts in creating energy options from wastewater processing.	The City needs to continue to prioritize investing in transportation infrastructure. Modernizing our street networks, bus lines, rail networks, and making sure neighborhoods are more walkable will spur economic development in the short and long term.	Our zoning and development ordinances need massive changing and updating in general. The most important thing that needs to happen is we complete our comprehensive vision plan. The completed UDO represents the tools that can be used to execute the plan. With no plan, the tools are not as effective. We need individual city departments to present action plans that spell out how they will take aggressive steps to reach our goals. Those plans should be compiled to an overall master plan which will guide departmental policy which will be the tools used to achieve our goals. We must make sure vulnerable communities are at the table during the Comprehensive 2040 plan process. Historically, vulnerable communities have been left out of city planning processes. Those communities have been remediate to live in areas with poor environments that lead to poor health outcomes. This planning process needs to correct that history.	We will not solve our transit problems until we solve our street connectivity problem. We can put as many bus and train lines into our city as we want if people can't get to them from their doorstep to stations we will continue to grow into a massive unsolvable transportation nightmare. There have been many articles lamenting the lack of connectivity in our street networks. I like this article the best (https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/charlotte-nc-has-america-s-messiest-street-grid/). Our neighborhoods are spaghetti bowls of streets butted against each other with no way in or out between neighborhoods. We (The City) must find ways to connect street networks and neighborhoods in ways that provide more connectivity from all directions so our city transit networks can serve as the foundation for regional transit service.	We need to adopt a plan that aims to generally "green" our city. Besides just looking at the way we have traditionally planted trees we need to stimulate the adoption of innovative methods to get the type of plant coverage that this city needs and deserves. Our new strategies have to include green and living rooftops, vertical gardens on the sides of buildings like parking decks, and the prioritization of cultivating native plant species, and building a critical mass of community and public gardens. We can't simply look to the goals and practices that we have adopted in the past in the changing reality of our city.
At Large	Julie Eiselt	D	I'm incredibly proud to have been a part of passing the Sustainable Energy Action Plan, and as chair of the transportation and planning committee, I am intent on making sure that the 2040 Comprehensive Vision Plan is developed with environmental sustainability in mind. We've already been able to establish Charlotte as a national leader in the fight against climate change, and our carbon from the Bloomberg American Cities Initiative is proof that we're already being recognized for our commitment and our progress towards these goals. We have to continue to take actionable steps in this area by incentivizing more sustainable construction in the city, and by developing a more ecologically sound transit system. These two aims are inextricably linked as Council develops policy in terms of stormwater runoff, density, and transit-oriented development.	Reaching the goals of the Vision Zero plan is essential to ensuring that Charlotte is a safe place for people to walk, run, and bike, not only as a safe means of recreation but also of transportation. First and foremost, the City can address the needs of the Vision Zero plan by taking its goals into serious consideration when allocating resources for capital improvements to transportation infrastructure. Strategically designed roadways with well defined bike lanes and sidewalks, along with more visible crosswalks and revamped traffic light systems and placement will all go a long way towards achieving our desired outcomes for the Vision Zero plan.	City Council's primary role is to make the voice of Charlotte's residents heard as the City makes important decisions that determine how our home will grow and develop over the next few years, and what it will look like decades from now. That role has never been more important than in the development of the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan and its complementary Unified Development Ordinance. Together, these policy guides will dictate the pace and form at which our community and our neighborhoods grow, so it's imperative that Council members do everything in their power to stay apprised of the way these plans are taking shape, and encourage public participation in the community meetings, while also being available to relay any resident concerns to staff for further consideration and study. These plans are all about building community, so they can't properly be developed without strong community input.	In order for these transit plans to be a success, Charlotte has to take the lead in establishing strong lines of communication across constituencies in every single one of these counties. No project of this scale will be able to get off the ground without input and buy-in from city and county governments, the state, local businesses, corporate partners, colleges and universities, and community groups. We all need to be on the same page about what our goals are and how we're going to achieve them, and Charlotte is uniquely positioned to lead that discussion. In the meantime, there are a number of changes we can make right here in our own city to improve the quality of our mass transit systems. The average one-way trip on a CATS bus takes 90 minutes, and our primary goal should be getting that down to a half-hour by taking a hard look at the way we plan and prioritize bus rapid transit, and starting to pilot dedicated bus lanes along some of the city's busiest public transit corridors.	The tree canopy cannot be preserved with a one-to-one tree replacement ratio. This is a policy that treats the symptoms and not the cause of our city's shrinking canopy. In partnership with the County, the City needs to be more intentional about the way we are using land, especially in terms of vast development and subdivisions, and new construction that demands large swathes of asphalt for parking. We need more parks and green space, and less concrete covering the ground throughout the region in order to preserve the tree canopy of our communities and those in the surrounding area.
At Large	Dimple Ajmera	D	I was honored to Chair the Environment Committee and help Charlotte become a global leader in sustainability with bipartisan support. The adoption of the Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) is the city's first-ever framework to transition to a low carbon future. Within 24-hours of its passing, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg visited Charlotte to announce a \$2.5 million grant from his foundation toward Charlotte's efforts to fight climate change. I will continue to champion the SEAP implementation along with my colleagues to make sure its goals are being met.	We have to prioritize our public safety enforcement. Protect all road users, especially those with disabilities. We need an action plan restating our commitment to have safe plans for transit so no bus stop in this community will not be accessible for ADA requirements. This will create a safe interface for transit. Sidewalks are especially important, as are LPIs (Leading Pedestrian Interval) and these assets must be distributed evenly across the various Charlotte communities.	The City Council's role in supporting Charlotte's sustainable built environment starts with the FY2020 budget, and supporting the development of the UDO and the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan.	In regards to the 2030 Transit Plan, I believe we must expand our service through supporting CATS's efforts to complete fixed guideway lines, with regional transit investments. This would also require legislative activity to reprioritize NCDOT investments into integrated transportation networks.	Tree canopy is important for sustainability because trees help clean the air. Trees also provide shade which is important for large cities that will continue to have skyrocketing heat waves as climate change progresses. The effects trees have with storm water runoff cannot be ignored either, we need green space so water can soak into the ground instead of flooding streets and sewers. Charlotte currently meets the standard for the Ground Level Ozone federal standard but we are close to the non-attainment. We're in process of updating our tree ordinance, and public engagement is critical in getting this right to preserve and protect our rich tree canopy.
At Large	James "Smuggie" Mitchell	D	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
At Large	Joshua Richardson	R	This is key and requires a holistic approach. We made some guidelines to reduce our carbon use, but live in a industrially growing city. Trees and other parts of the natural environment are the key to carbon reduction, as they offset carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, but we keep removing the natural environment to grow our city. We really need to look at how our local industries are growing and ensure good zoning policy to balance the producing of CO2 with natural remedies. Along with updating our transit and energy production methods. With all these changes the plan will simply remain on paper with no visible changes.	We have to make protected methods of transit. We have some of the most open side walks and bike lines of any city which contribute to the deaths. If people had safe places to walk and ride this would be reduced. Ensuring good medians, protected bike lanes, raised, well sized side walks, etc. Are the easiest in reach methods of change that we can pay for and implement on a local level.	City Council is the highest supervisor in Charlotte. If a plan is not balanced, and equitable then we should deny it. The UDO is key as we need better, focused restrictions to keep development in check. It often seems like we are anti trees as we approving zoning petition that will create more traffic hence CO2 Pollution then do not mandate nearly enough development of alternative transport by developers. For me, a rule stating a percentage of asphalt and concrete must be present on a development is necessary and these are ideas that can be taken up under the UDO and development projects in the 2040 plan.	The best way is electric buses. We can force better routes as we would station the bus routes along charging points, that way we can connect people from home to work better and reduce wasteful routes that only serve a handful of people. We need to ensure cats is a good steward of resources and that we are planning routes around the most traveled areas to the most traveled destinations.	Cleanliness of our air, general appearance, heat reduction; so many benefits a good tree canopy provides. Our tree canopy has been hit hard locally due to storms and illness, plus developers are replacing healthy, larger trees with smaller, less productive ones. We have to ensure land access for trees, and that a certain part of a development must include them. It is necessary that we keep the front line of our environmental fight in good condition.
1	Larken Eggleston	D	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
2	Malcolm Graham	D	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
2	Jacob Robinson	R	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response

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3	Victoria Watlington	D	Sustainability must be integrated into every focus area of the City, as our environment directly impacts our safety, health, and quality of life. As a member of the West Blvd Neighborhood Coalition board, we have had the pleasure of working with Sustain Charlotte on initiatives to improve the quality of life in the Corridor. We hope to continue progress toward the goals as part of the implementation of the West Corridor Playbook. The top four priorities when I step into office each have a climate change component: (1) Community-driven Strategic Planning: thoughtful, holistic, and sustainable approach to land use planning (prioritizing connectivity, preserving our tree canopy, local food access) (2) Affordable Housing: enabling lower cost and sustainable living (emphasizing redevelopment, energy-efficient buildings) (3) Transportation: increasing connectivity and reducing emissions by investing in public and alternative transit (converting public vehicles to electric, including airport ground fleets) (4) Economic Mobility: investing in workforce development in target areas, including advanced manufacturing and technology, with a focus on sustainability	As a West Blvd corridor resident, pedestrian safety hits close to home. I believe we must invest in complete streets where possible, providing protected bike lanes and non-curb-side sidewalks to ensure a safer experience. This ties directly into our UDO and TOD ordinances, and development conditions to receive City incentives. Implementing UDO/TOD well and reviewing rezoning with greater scrutiny around transportation are key components to delivering the Vision Zero goals.	We must ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is a living document, that we refer to in rezoning decisions. In addition, we have to ask the right questions, leaning in on the quantifiable metrics associated with SEAP goals. Finally, our vote must reflect our commitment to sustainability when reviewing potential builds.	Much of the answer is found in the question: we must expand our transit network, and make public transit a sound business decision for our Charlotte area households--affordable, convenient, reliable, and safe. As the largest city in the region, we have to take the lead in collaboration and creativity, being willing to try a number of solutions as we explore possibilities.	A healthy tree canopy is vital to our health, environment, wildlife, and character. To meet this goal, we've got to make tree planting a community effort, bringing the cause to life for homeowners, businesses, and organizations alike. We have to be proactive in development, considering how to replace trees removed for construction.
4	Renee Perkins Johnson	D	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
4	Brandon Pierce	R	Sustainable communities are the forefront of my campaign and a particular passion of mine. I think we have a personal obligation to leave this city better than how we found it. The SEAP sets actionable goals and that is what I like most about the plan. An example of how I would help ensure these goals are met is leveraging alternative funds (public private partnerships) for certain projects that the city is funding and use the money we save on getting our city fleet to 100% electric. Another example is working with the city to incentive developers and homeowners to go green and use renewable energy. So if you build your building with solar panels, perhaps you can reach higher density. This is similar to what we do for affordable housing goals so I know it can be done.	I have long advocated to reexamine the way we design our streets especially as it relates to walkability and bike transit. I am happy to see that the city has already been working on expanding sidewalks and adding bike lanes across town but there are two changes I would like to invest in when I get on council. 1.) We need neighborhood friendly barriers in between the sidewalks and the roads. This will add an additional safety element to our walkable roads and 2.) We need to start making the same walkable and rideable street investments on the East & West side that we are making in Center city and Southpark. The communities that need this type of infrastructure are always the last ones to receive it and I think it's time for that to change.	The city's role is the leader. We are the leaders. We can lead this sustainability planning in the Comp plan and UDO by again making sure we are rewarding and incentivizing communities and development to invest in sustainability. I pointed out some specific policy examples in the first question. Some other examples in addition to above is reinvesting in a concept like the innovation barn where its social connection hub but also creating awareness on sustainability. I would be an advocate that we form one on the East, West, North and South. Another way we can be leaders in this process is reimagining our transportation investments. As mentioned above the areas that needs walkability are often the last that gets it. I think in our Comprehensive plan we should be designing the process to make sure these communities get	When it comes to transit we should have two priorities. 1.) Reducing the time and hassle of current transit commuting. It is absolutely ridiculous that it takes 90 minutes on average for a bus ride. This is part to blame for us ranking 97th out of 100. Another investment we should make is better route management. Right now, the way our city is set up you might have to walk half a mile to bus station, to wait, and then eventually board the bus to then have to board one of the transit lines, to then have to use a scooter or a walk the final stretch of your destination. I made that sound easy but often it's not easy at all, it's confusing and time consuming. We need better route management that can plan out someone's trip from beginning to end before they start their trip. 2.) We need to start making technological investments to prepare for autonomous vehicles.	I don't have enough time to talk about the importance of a healthy tree canopy which that ranges from reducing greenhouse gas emissions to removing pollutants from the air to even simple things like raising property value. I think the better question is what steps should we take to meet our goal? If we are talking long term planning we absolutely should visit the notion of Urban Forests. I think as a city we should become the leaders in this. For the short term we should take a look at unoccupied and abandoned property and work to purchase that land back and redevelop rather than always trying to clear trees to create vacant lots.
5	Matt Newton	D	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
6	Gina Navarette	D	Charlotte City Council has approved an ambitious plan to reduce carbon emissions, which will require reducing the energy consumption of individual citizens, city agencies, business, schools, etc. I am in full agreement with adopting SEAP and will work to ensure its goals are met. We can only meet those goals by engaging with and educating residents, business leaders, government agencies and private groups. As City Council, we must invest heavily to design and construct green buildings and to retrofit older buildings for better energy efficiency. We must ensure that this investment is equitable so that people of all income groups can live, travel, and work in clean, energy efficient environments. Environmental justice must be part of this plan. We must begin now to invest in low-carbon transportation, exploring where and how CATs can efficiently use electric busses. While there are legitimate concerns about the impact of relying on electric busses, and while hybrid busses are a reasonable start, we can't reach our ultimate energy reduction goals without investing in zero-carbon public transportation and the infrastructure necessary to encourage our citizens to transition to carbon-free vehicles. In order for this to be achieved, the city must invest in more charging stations for electric vehicles and these will need to be powered by solar cells. We also need to invest in infrastructure to provide pedestrian and bicyclists safe streets. Non-motorized modes of transportation are not only the greenest way to travel but also add to the residents' health and overall quality of life.	It is the responsibility of city leaders and planners to ensure that all citizens in all neighborhoods can choose to walk, bike, drive, or use public transportation safely. Road safety is a key factor in attracting and retaining residents in the densely populated urban areas. Pedestrian and bicycle accidents should not be accepted as unavoidable as they are often predictable. Thus, we need to gather information to better anticipate and plan for likely mistakes. I will support funding to identify our most dangerous streets, intersections, and neighborhoods. I will support investing in roads, trails, and paths to provide for multiple modes of safe travel. I believe that an equitable plan will consider the risks in all neighborhoods and value the safety of all residents, whether on foot, bicycle or behind the wheel. This plan will need to include adequate infrastructure to keep pedestrians safe, such as creating buffers for pedestrian and bike paths, adding sidewalks, crossings and raised medians. It may also include lowering maximum speed of vehicles, improve visibility of pedestrians, and redesigning traffic flow at high risk intersections. I am also in favor of implementing all-way pedestrian crossings in high traffic areas. Finally, I would look into widening bike paths while narrowing street lanes for vehicles since research indicates that wider vehicle lanes lead to increased speed and diminished driver awareness.	I am running to serve on Charlotte City Council during a time when Charlotte will be envisioning, developing, and implementing plans that will shape the future of the Queen City. It is an exciting time. Our choices now will have a lasting impact on this city and its current and future residents. Our City's prosperity depends on Charlotte's leaders seizing this opportunity to commit to smart, sustainable growth. For example, we must encourage growth of vibrant communities around our transportation hubs -- neighborhoods where people can find jobs and affordable housing, walk or bike safely, shop, dine, and conveniently access public transportation. In order to implement any such plan, City Council members will have to work with all stakeholders as it revises zoning ordinances tailored to such a plan. Many properties may need to be rezoned to make the city more sustainable, livable and business-friendly.	Despite strides in creating more public transportation options in recent years, Charlotte is still heavily reliant on automobiles. This has a serious environmental cost and negatively impacts our residents' quality of life. Charlotte's challenge is not just to find funding to expand of alternative modes of transportation (whether walking, biking, or using public transportation), but to develop plans that make these alternative modes attractive to the people who might use them. We must invest in efforts to increase the convenience, reliability, affordability and safety of our public transportation system. I support changing CATS from a hub and spoke system to adding bus routes to make it easier to get cross-town. I also believe that implementing user-friendly phone apps and making buses Wi-Fi accessible would help in the planning of one's trip and tracking a particular bus. Making the journey as user friendly as possible makes it easy for people to want to ride the bus. For the long-term prosperity of our city, we must also develop an effective regional transportation system. Charlotte needs leaders that will rise to the challenge of developing such a plan. A regional transportation system will not just cross county lines, but state lines. We will have to work with many players, including neighboring municipalities, our state representatives, and federal agencies as we create and fund financing for a transportation system that will connect our city with urban and rural communities within our region. However, we cannot plan for future prosperity without thinking of Charlotte as part of a greater region. In our region as well as our city, we when we all prosper, we all win.	When I first came to Charlotte, I was immediately struck by the splendor of our magnificent trees. Our trees have an aesthetic and emotional appeal. They delight us and make us proud of our beautiful city. But they are so much more than that. Trees produce oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide. They reduce pollutants in our air and water. They cool our neighborhoods and homes, reducing our energy consumption and allowing us to enjoy time outside even in the heat of summer. They provide a home for wildlife. As a Charlotte City Council member, I will continue partner with residents and groups dedicated to protecting and increasing our tree canopy. I will support educational and awareness initiatives. I will work to secure funds to plant, protect, and maintain our tree canopy, promoting an equitable distribution of those resources because I believe all residents should enjoy the benefits of a healthy tree canopy in the places they live, work and relax. I will promote plans to protect our most mature trees and our urban forests because planting young trees that are often not even native species will never compensate for the damage caused by clear-cutting land for development.
6	Tariq Bokhari	R	No response	No response	No response	No response	No response
7	Edmund H. Driggs	R	I supported the creation of SEAP and voted for it when the final version came to Council for a decision. The plan identifies Charlotte as a leader in carbon reduction while being practical about efficacy and cost of steps to achieve our goal. I have already supported one provision of the plan, to migrate our bus fleet to hybrid and then all-electric technology when replacements are due. Other measures will be evaluated as the plan's assessment phase continues.	Near-term steps include improving sight lines and lighting at intersections as well as tougher enforcement of speed limits. The City's Vision 2040 Plan and Unified Development Ordinance will provide for greater walkability and more bike lanes.	Council has been overseeing the progress of the UDO plan for over two years and called for the creation of a 2040 Comprehensive Plan to make the UDO process more intentional. The final plan will require reconciling our environmental and quality of life goals with the challenges presented by the population growth that is projected for the City. It is important that we establish feasible targets so the plan does not become unworkable as events unfold.	The Transit Plan involves the City, the State and entities such as the MTC and CARYPO. The City should take the lead in developing transit plans that connect citizens, reduce travel times and improve air quality. As the MSA around Charlotte increases in population, regional transportation planning will become essential. Implementation of sound transit plans also impacts other City priorities such as economic opportunity affordable housing and education.	Trees are important aesthetically and because of the role they play in air quality, reducing temperatures and other environmental factors. A critical requirement for policy going forward is that it measure not just the coverage of the canopy, but also the quality and health of the trees. Mature trees are being removed and replaced by saplings. This is another area where goals need to be set realistically in the context of growth expectations so that the canopy goal is not ignored in the long run.