



2023 LOCAL  
PRIMARY  
CANDIDATE  
INTERVIEW

FRANKLIN  
CITY COUNCIL  
AT-LARGE



CLAYTON  
BLACK  
*Republican*

*Committee to Elect  
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#### QUESTION 1:

**Do you think your main street / downtown is healthy and successful? What would you do to support continued success or help create the change you want to see?**

Absolutely. Franklin's downtown is healthy and vibrant, especially compared to what it looked like when I moved to Franklin in the mid-2000s. The one aspect about the downtown that could use some more improvement is bringing more Franklin College students to the downtown area to work, shop, and enjoy their time off from studies. It has been steady progress, but coming from a Franklin College student and soon-to-be graduate, there are things that downtown Franklin lacks that other college towns in Indiana do offer. Apart from entertainment, there could be more businesses that cater to a larger market aside from restaurants, coffee shops, and boutiques. In addition, the attraction of more professional-based businesses can help keep graduates in town and hopefully choose to live in Franklin for a long time.

#### QUESTION 2:

**What are the community's housing needs and how do we address them?**

As Johnson County grows, housing will become a more demanding market. Greenwood and Whiteland have been very quick to seize on that opportunity. What I want to see in Franklin is a concerted effort to build more homes, but homes built well by trusted developers and homes that cater to a true workforce and up-and-coming professionals. The housing market has numerous facets which include national factors that are very difficult to address from a local standpoint. Franklin could use more homes, but homes that fulfill the American Dream of owning your own home and being proud of it. There needs to be a tactical approach in determining what types of housing is constructed in Franklin.

#### QUESTION 3:

**If you received a proposal to build a new piece of public infrastructure in your community (road, bridge, trail, etc.), how would you evaluate whether that project was worth implementing?**

Over time infrastructure degrades and needs repairs. When evaluating infrastructure needs from a fiscally conservative point-of-view, necessary repairs and maintenance are required, but additional infrastructure carries the usage of taxpayer's money and should be treated with the utmost sensibility. Any additional infrastructure should be a concerted discussion that will study the fiscal aspect of the construction and study its impact on local businesses and citizens.

#### QUESTION 4:

**As you evaluate future development projects, what do you think are the most important considerations in granting economic development incentives, and what types of incentives are you most supportive of?**

Franklin has a long tradition of embodying the image of a small Midwestern city. It is the reason my family and many others moved to Franklin. Preserving that image should be the first priority, but change is also inevitable as more folks move to Johnson County, so the challenge is how to balance those concerns. Welcoming small businesses is at the heart of maintaining our downtown and spending money locally. When it comes to expanding industries that require lots of square feet to operate out of, the conversation needs to be had on how it will impact our image and what money that brings to Franklin. The conversation needs to be had on what tax revenue streams are more conducive to Franklin, assured tax revenue from our agricultural market versus speculative tax revenue from companies who have not yet committed to expanding into Franklin. It's a very difficult conversation, but at heart should be maintaining our small-town feel. That's why people move to Franklin.



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**ROSS O.  
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*Republican*

*Ross Shilts for  
City Council At-Large  
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**QUESTION 1:**

**Do you think your main street / downtown is healthy and successful? What would you do to support continued success or help create the change you want to see?**

Franklin's downtown area is as vibrant and alive as ever. What's most important right now is maintaining that vibrancy and working to resolve the issues facing business owners downtown. Some of them have shared concerns with me about parking deficits and a shortage of dumpsters to dispose of waste. Working with Franklin's Street Department and Waste Management I think we could find solutions to these problems that don't compromise the accessibility or small town feel of the downtown area and Franklin as a whole.

**QUESTION 2:**

**What are the community's housing needs and how do we address them?**

Right now, Franklin is experiencing housing pressure on two fronts. We have many people who live outside of Franklin who want to move in, but who have difficulty finding housing that's in their price range. So, we want to continue to build high-quality housing that can help meet this demand. There has also been an unfortunate growth in Franklin's un-housed population. This issue isn't a simple one, as solutions like Section 8 housing tend to exacerbate the issue of homelessness and poverty rather than resolve it. Of course, the best solution to homelessness is an expansion of economic opportunity. This sounds simple, but in the case of homelessness, unfortunately, the lack of economic opportunity comes from underlying issues such as mental health, educational and training deficits, and the cycle of poverty, which are much more difficult to address. The best path forward for the city, in my opinion, is partnering and coordinating with organizations like the Atterbury Job Corps, Interchurch Food Pantry, and Kic-It to address these underlying issues.

**QUESTION 3:**

**If you received a proposal to build a new piece of public infrastructure in your community (road, bridge, trail, etc.), how would you evaluate whether that project was worth implementing?**

The first question, and the most fundamental one, is whether this prospective project is feasible, necessary, and wanted. Determining the first two of these criteria lies primarily with the committees and departments of the city. The Planning Department, Clerk-Treasurer's Office, and the various committees that review proposals for development all have their parts to play in determining the viability of city projects, and they forward their recommendations to the City Council for final review, which takes all three of the above-mentioned criteria into account and renders a decision. These recommendations and the input of the people of Franklin, must be the foremost determiners of whether or not a project is approved.

**QUESTION 4:**

**As you evaluate future development projects, what do you think are the most important considerations in granting economic development incentives, and what types of incentives are you most supportive of?**

Development incentives are, at their heart, tools. Like any tool they can be used well, and they can be used poorly. If they are used to encourage businesses to develop here in Franklin, good. But we, as a community, must be wary of inviting and encouraging businesses that move out as readily as they move in, and leaving the city stuck with an empty and poorly maintained building. Thus far the city has done a good job in this regard, but as we grow, the temptation towards growth only for the sake of growth will only get stronger. As such, it's important that the city encourage growth from businesses that plan to stay in Franklin rather than those that can flow out as easily as they flow in.



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**TODD A.  
SHUCK**  
*Republican*

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**QUESTION 1:**

**Do you think your main street / downtown is healthy and successful? What would you do to support continued success or help create the change you want to see?**

I think our downtown/Main Street is very healthy and continues to be successful. I can remember when visitors would drive through Franklin on their way to a different destination or only visit one of our many antique shops. With time, great leadership and enough foresight to envision what our city could become, downtown began to take on a new identity. Franklin is now considered to be a destination for visitors from many surrounding counties. I will continue to support what is in place but would also work with those to keep moving in a direction where our children and grandchildren want to live and raise a family!

**QUESTION 2:**

**What are the community's housing needs and how do we address them?**

Our community housing needs are an issue on all levels. This has always been an issue but seems to be more prevalent today because of the desire we have seen to live in Franklin. As I have done in my business dealings over the years, it comes down to the numbers. I have experience in residential development and commercial development, so I am familiar with the process and the thinking that goes along with it. I would work with all departments and city officials to increase the housing availability at all levels of need.

**QUESTION 3:**

**If you received a proposal to build a new piece of public infrastructure in your community (road, bridge, trail, etc.), how would you evaluate whether that project was worth implementing?**

I would enlist the expertise of the city engineering department and the city's financial team to evaluate the worth of implementing any type of public infrastructure. A cost analysis would have to be completed so that any decision made would have to be in the best interest of the citizens of Franklin. Cost analysis is not only what the cost is today but also over a long period of time.

**QUESTION 4:**

**As you evaluate future development projects, what do you think are the most important considerations in granting economic development incentives, and what types of incentives are you most supportive of?**

As you evaluate future development projects, the topic of tax abatements always comes up. The tax abatement is a very good tool to use however you must evaluate the worth of using such tool. Again, there is an immediate cost for using it, and there is also a long-term cost of using it. Careful consideration should be given every time. We cannot rubber stamp each project with a tax abatement unless we take the time to complete our due diligence each project deserves.



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**SHAWN  
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**QUESTION 1:**

**Do you think your main street / downtown is healthy and successful? What would you do to support continued success or help create the change you want to see?**

Yes. Franklin's downtown is healthy and successful. We have added parks, shops, restaurants, housing, an amphitheater, trails, and pickle ball courts.

**QUESTION 2:**

**What are the community's housing needs and how do we address them?**

We are in the process of adding more housing in Franklin. We have approved a number of projects to help Franklin grow and try to meet the needs of our community.

**QUESTION 3:**

**If you received a proposal to build a new piece of public infrastructure in your community (road, bridge, trail, etc.), how would you evaluate whether that project was worth implementing?**

With any new project, you have to look to see if it is needed in the community, will the community support it, where is the money coming from, and will it benefit the community.

**QUESTION 4:**

**As you evaluate future development projects, what do you think are the most important considerations in granting economic development incentives, and what types of incentives are you most supportive of?**

I look at how will it benefit the city and community. What is the city's return on investment. Do we already have an existing project or similar project in place. Will the community support it. What effect will it have on the future growth of the city. I support grants and tax abatements for existing business and future business.